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VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE

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God in Early Christian Thought

Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson

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Edited by
ANDREW B. MCGOWAN,
BRIAN E. DALEY S.J. and
TIMOTHY J. GADEN

BRILL

God in Early Christian Thought

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

Texts and Studies of
Early Christian Life and Language

Editors
J. den Boeft – Bart D. Ehrman – J. van Oort
D.T. Runia – C. Scholten – J.C.M. van Winden

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INTRODUCTION

Early Christian studies have changed. New emphases on diversity of thought and practice, and on the experiences and beliefs of Christians other than the great theologians, have accompanied more and deeper attention to a variety of ancient texts beyond those previously regarded as useful or revealing, as well as to material evidence. The diversity of Christian discourses and rituals, issues connected with class and gender, concerns about the construction of the body as well as the progress of the soul, and the role and function of languages and texts themselves, are all now being given fresh and deeper attention.

In the more specific realm of ideas and their history, theoretical assumptions somewhat different from those of classical historical theology now inform interpreters of the most foundational of ancient theological texts. And scholars exploring the beliefs of the ancient Christians are less likely to focus their inquiry exclusively on the work of the "Fathers," but have come more and more to consider the thoughts, experiences and practices of various women and men, so far as they are accessible. Thus the great tradition of emergent Catholic Christianity once easily evoked by the term "Patristics" is increasingly viewed in relation to a diversity at best imperfectly dealt with by categories of "orthodoxy" and "heresy."

God

In this different intellectual landscape, where practice is emphasized and doctrinal uniformity challenged, the question of God is perennial and fundamental. This volume ventures into that area of greatest scope, editors and contributors aware not only of the trepidation proper to mystery, but also of new pitfalls, as well as opportunities, arising from the methods and interests now deemed appropriate or necessary.

Since the idea of a comprehensive or definitive approach to the topic is more problematic than ever, these essays take a variety of approaches to the early Christian experience of God, reflecting the changes just described. While individually modest in scope, they seek

to address questions of both ancient and modern significance, using particular issues and problems, or single thinkers and distinct texts, as means to engage far larger questions. They include studies of doctrine and theology as traditionally understood, but also explorations of early Christian understandings of God that emerge from liturgy, art, and asceticism, and in relation to the social order and to nature itself.

Some engage and forward the state of thinking on figures or issues familiar in traditional forms of historical theology. Khaled Anatolios, Joseph Trigg, Christopher Beeley, Annewies van den Hoek, and the late Richard Norris bring recognized expertise to the well-known figures of Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine. James Ernest considers Athanasius as exegete, and Andrew McGowan relates Tertullian the theologian to his immediate context and controversies. Brian Daley's synthetic treatment of Christological and Trinitarian theology provides a fresh perspective on classical material.

Others deal with slightly less prominent but not less important sources. Katharina Bracht provides a focussed study related to the important but less well-known Methodius of Olympus, a major focus of the work of Lloyd Patterson who is not represented but honored in these studies. Ute Possekel and Susan Holman reflect the growing interest in the Syriac tradition, an area of great scholarly endeavour and interest for many years, but which has not yet had its whole deserved impact on historical theology.

Some contributors address topics which have not traditionally been prominent in Patristic theology, but which are germane to understanding the God of the early Christians. Robin Jensen and Robert Daly explore aspects of piety and theology in art and liturgy respectively. Susan Holman's discussion of poverty, and Robert Grant's of nature, address ancient Christian perspectives on two areas where questions of God's presence and activity continue to arise.

In their various ways these studies all grapple with what is arguably the distinctively Christian problem and promise: of holding in creative tension the philosophical impossibility, and the soteriological imperative, of knowing God.

Traditions

Early Christian thought and practice were not created *ex nihilo* but emerged at least in part as adaptation and response to a variety of existing traditions, interpreted in the context of the emergent Church and its proclamation. Greco-Roman philosophy and religious practice are obvious antecedents and partners in conversation and controversy, and Judaism also. And as soon as distinctively Christian voices and perspectives appear, there are discourses within Christianity, and across its competing trajectories, that involve similar internal processes of borrowing, change and critique.

The early Christian theologians were interpreters of an inherited philosophical tradition, which appears prominently in this book. Richard Norris relates Irenaeus' thought to its Middle Platonist context and heritage, but emphasizes the controversial and rhetorical employment of that intellectual inheritance, which was not merely a sort of timeless philosophical substance. Clement of Alexandria also engaged Valentinian thought in elucidating the relationship between Christian theology and philosophical tradition. Annewies Van den Hoek's discussion of Clement demonstrates the emerging necessity for early Christian thinkers to find a common philosophical language for controversy among themselves also. Irenaeus, Norris suggests, is also influenced by the rhetorical context of the refutation of Valentinianism, conceding or leaving aside the problem of the divine generation of the Son in the process of refuting an alternative doctrine of creation. On the other hand, van den Hoek points out that the controversial context may have encouraged Clement's use of female imagery for God, shared with the Valentinian theology he attacked. Given the variety of texts and the complexity of controversial context, the untroubled existence side-by-side in Clement's thought of trajectories of God's transcendence, immanence and unity is less surprising.

Christian theology also had to engage with existing questions raised in philosophical discourse. Katharina Bracht addresses God's "self-sufficiency" across thinkers and texts from Plato to Porphyry, in specific relation to the work of Methodius. Bracht, like Lloyd Patterson, concludes that Methodius' results are readily interpreted against that tradition. Again however, this deployment of philosophical resources is made with very specific controversies at hand and in mind, and there are resulting consequences.

These all point to the most remarkable and difficult example of in-

ner-Christian reception and critique in the first few centuries, namely the case of Origen. Origen is alleged as the source of the view that God and the universe are interdependent, which Methodius seeks to refute and which Bracht interprets. As one of the earlier critics of Origen, Methodius is less readily linked to the fascinating and problematic dynamics associated with "Origenism," yet already for him the man Origen and ideas attributed to him represent one another, negatively.

Yet when emerging and maturing Christian theological tradition interpreted itself, as well as Jewish and (other) Greco-Roman sources, it was often to do so through Origen. In this volume the contributions of Christopher Beeley and Joseph Trigg demonstrate this relationship. Trigg's study of the influence of Origen on Gregory Nazianzen not only advances the important issue of Origen's relation to the Cappadocians, but touches upon the strikingly current question of how doctrine—as lived reality—can and must involve development. Where Trigg uses Gregory's discussion of pneumatology to make a point about revelation and hermeneutics, Beeley's study of the Holy Spirit in Gregory addresses the same text and some similar issues through a somewhat different interpretive lens, drawing a more directly pneumatological conclusion from exploration of the same hermeneutical discussion.

Signs

The symbols and signs by means of which God both reveals and is revealed are addressed explicitly in a number of these essays. They variously reflect recent and current developments in early Christian studies: in engagement with postmodern questions and contemporary philosophical tools; in foregrounding neglected writers and cultural traditions; and in attention to material as well as to literary evidence.

The most important set of signs is scripture itself. Some essays involve a sort of dialogue between contemporary theoretical perspectives and ancient theological texts. In the first few centuries, the interpretation of scripture becomes and continues as an area of great significance and contest, even while the Bible itself more or less appears and stabilizes as canon.

James Ernest explores the means and ends employed by authors from Melito to Athanasius in speaking about the divine in scripture, drawing attention to continued diversity more than suggesting a simple answer to how meaning could be stabilized or fixed, then or now.

This discussion of exegesis addresses linguistic signs, and invokes the controverted question of what, if anything, may be said to lie beyond the text.

Augustine's famous use of the distinction between *res* and *signum* is central to the discussion of *De Trinitate* by Khaled Anatolios. This contribution also connects ancient text with contemporary theory, employing structuralist oppositions and particularly Jean-Luc Marion's categories of "idol" and "icon" as further means to elucidation. Anatolios' exposition of Augustine's understanding of the Father-Son relationship demonstrates how Augustine is concerned, against the Homoians, to uphold a Nicene understanding in the iconic mode. The history of revelation is a series of iconic "provocations towards the eschatological vision of God."

Clement, expounded by van den Hoek, presents an early response to traditional questions regarding vision or knowledge of God, bringing scripture and philosophy together like his Jewish predecessor Philo. Because everything that comes with a name is begotten, God is beyond words and understanding. This essay however makes translation a central part of its offering, a reminder of the inevitability of language. Epistemologically, Clement nevertheless holds hope of some knowledge of God, as the soul progresses from lesser mysteries to the greater ones experienced only in contemplation. Christ plays a crucial role as mediator in enabling that understanding—the Son offers accessibility to the unknowable and invisible God.

This paradox between the invisible God and the material Christ necessarily appears in the world of material culture, in the visual presentation of Christian belief about God. Robin Jensen discusses attempts to construct a Trinitarian account of that tension, exploring the relationship between early Christian discursive assertion of the invisibility of God and actual evidence for Christian artistic depictions of the divine. As in the case of philosophy, Greco-Roman norms that preceded the emergence of Christian art are important. Simply put, although Christians engaged strongly in polemic against idolatry, they actually made images of God. It was common for early Christian writers to explain Old Testament theophanies as involving the visible second person of the Trinity, but these events were not favoured for depiction in actual works of art. The agreement between the two realms of "imaging"—discursive and artistic—is only partial.

Even in literary evidence, the question of depicting or describing God did not always begin with the same problematic. In Syriac tradi-

tion, examined here by Ute Possekel, the fact of God's "clothing himself in names" is not a means of obscuring or of substituting text or symbol for divine being, but of disclosing through a diversity of symbolism what cannot be directly known. In this distinctive use of symbol, the verbal images by which God is thus adorned are many and varied—and often strikingly feminine in character—but exist precisely to bridge the gap between creator and creature.

Practice

If language about God functions both as means of disclosure and as means of concealment for early Christian authors, they harboured few doubts about the effective and tangible presence of God in the Eucharist. More generally, in ancient Christianity the context of prayer and worship is often presented as a medium for encounter with the divine, both in explicit theological discourse and otherwise.

Does this realm of research offer anything to the specifics of Christian doctrine? The liturgical cliché "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" has not often been given detailed and thoughtful application regarding the actual development of the Trinitarian *credendum*. Robert Daly demonstrates the fact and the importance of the ways liturgical prayer and its reference of the divine developed alongside more discursive treatments of the Christian doctrine of God. The classic anaphoras of the fourth and fifth centuries are clearly influenced by wider debates; less clear is whether and how the *lex orandi* has itself influenced the (other) manifestations of Christian doctrine. Nonetheless, comparison of earlier and later texts—the *Didache* and the Liturgy of John Chrysostom—illustrates the parallelism of liturgical and doctrinal developments.

If the liturgical reality of the Eucharist is one assured locus of divine presence somewhat underrated in much scholarship, another is the social reality of the poor. Susan Holman notes the relation between the two in examining how early Christian texts stress the opportunity that the "Christ-poor" (Matt 25:31–46) offer as a resource of divine grace, and one that is related to the early Christian doctrine of God, and to Christology in particular. This essay employs language of "orthodoxy" but revises the terms as it does so, giving due recognition to the fundamental nexus between appropriate doctrine and appropriate practice—a position perhaps common across different doctrines and practices in ancient times, however uniformly neglected under modernity.

Tertullian is one author whose concerns for doctrine and practice, and witness to unity and diversity, have been much debated. Andrew McGowan's discussion of Tertullian's highly influential doctrinal thought suggests deeper connections with the ascetic and charismatic emphases of the "Montanist" New Prophecy than has usually been allowed, at least in the one local setting. Like Holman, McGowan seeks to relate issues of context to the emergence of doctrine without suggesting reductionism.

There is of course a growing public discourse about what is now known—oddly anthropocentrically—as the environment. Ancient approaches to nature and the cosmos were vastly different in character, but there are common themes at least in the desire to be free of the catastrophic consequences of forces still referred to quaintly as "acts of God." These questions, addressed by Robert Grant, therefore relate not only to ethics but also to theodicy.

Lloyd Patterson

The further unifying thread among these contributions is friendship, and a scholarly example. Lloyd George Patterson worked and taught in New York and Oxford, but the greater part of his career was spent in the Boston area, where he was for many years William Reed Huntington Professor of Historical Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Lloyd Patterson's work included two significant books, *God and History in Early Christian Thought* and *Methodius of Olympus*, one a very significant thematic exploration and the other a magisterial study of an underestimated figure.[1] The title of this book is of course an *hommage*. He died during the XIII International Patristics Conference at Oxford in 1999, two years after the publication of his magisterial work on Methodius.

The contributors are linked to him and his work, in many cases as active colleagues in *Patristica Bostoniensia*, a colloquium of the Boston Theological Institute. This book is a further tribute to his careful and committed scholarship, which was both firmly grounded in tradition

[1] *God and History in Early Christian Thought: A Study of Themes from Justin Martyr to Gregory the Great* (London: A & C Black, 1967); *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ*. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

and his own engagement as teacher of students preparing for ministry in Anglican contexts, as well as open and engaged with new dialogue partners with a range of critical questions. The scholarship of many of the contributors thus emerges from communities and commitments related to theological education, and retains a sense of engagement with religious practice and discourse.

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WHO IS THE DEMIURGE? IRENAEUS' PICTURE OF GOD IN *ADVERSUS HAERESES* 2

Richard A. Norris*

If, as the original title of *Adversus haereses* asserts, the teaching of Irenaeus' Valentinian opponents was a "knowledge" that was "falsely called so," it seems to follow that there must be a *true* knowledge; and this Irenaeus firmly believed.[1] He understood that true knowledge to be the apostolic gospel or proclamation or teaching which, as far as its notional content is concerned, had been handed on in the churches of Christ both in an oral form as baptismal catechesis—the Rule of Truth—and in written form as the four Gospels and apostolic letters (and with them, of course, the Acts of the Apostles and the Johannine Apocalypse). This knowledge was appropriated as truth—that is, embodied in the concrete life of a communal pattern of belief and behavior—through the process by which believers were initiated into the new life of the Spirit. Baptism brought people into the truth, then, in the sense that it established for believers the relation to God in Christ, which the Rule and the apostolic writings together proclaimed and characterized.

Between "the hypothesis of the truth," however, and that of Irenaeus' heretics, a curious relation obtained. No doubt, it was a relation of dissonance, but the dissonance in question was, at least partly, of an odd sort. It did not consist merely in the fact that the two hypotheses adopted or entailed contrary positions on a series of related issues: for example, the reference of the word "God," or the character and ground of human salvation, or the proper way to read the Jewish and Christian scriptures. It consisted also in the fact that they tended in many respects

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* Richard Norris was a Rhodes Scholar, Episcopal priest and distinguished theologian and historian who served on the faculties of the Philadelphia Divinity School (a forerunner of the Episcopal Divinity School) and the General Theological Seminary, and was Professor Emeritus of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. A close friend of Lloyd Patterson, he was an original editor of this volume and died before its completion.

[1] See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.7–8, with its account of the "integral faith" of the "spiritual disciple."

to cover different territories. There were, to be sure, certain important points at which the two accounts of things overlapped. Both involved, at least in principle, a way of reading the creation narrative in Genesis 1–3. By the same token, both provided, in principle, a particular understanding of the experience of redemption that was focused, for early Christians, in baptism. By and large, however, the great Ptolemaean myth that Irenaeus presents as typifying the ideas of his opponents, spends its time on matters to which Irenaeus' Rule—"the hypothesis of the truth"—does not even allude. The whole account of the generation of the Pleroma, the whole story of the two Wisdoms and their respective redemptions, the whole narrative of the engendering of the two stuffs, psychic and material, out of which the lower kosmos is formed—for these Irenaeus' Rule had no equivalents, or at any rate, no obvious equivalents.

This circumstance, which is less frequently noted than it ought to be, helps to explain the way in which Irenaeus sets about organizing his polemic. The subject matter of the Rule of Truth, as Irenaeus sees it, is coincident with that of the Scriptures. What it embraces is—phrased summarily—the way, the οἰκονομία of the Creator with regard to human creatures. This οἰκονομία is therefore the sole legitimate object of theological inquiry and discourse. Whatever goes beyond it is unsure, and therefore unsafe, speculation. Irenaeus is willing, accordingly, to engage his opponents on the field of this οἰκονομία: to controvert their scriptural exegesis and, in doing so, to justify and explicate "the hypothesis of the truth." Indeed he does just this in Books 3–5—and, in a relatively non-polemical manner, in his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*. His own principles, however, prevent him from offering an alternative account of the matters that take up the greater part of his opponents' hypothesis. If, for example, their story of the two Sophias falls outside the scope of the divine *oikonomia* as the Rule defines it, he cannot self-consistently offer a *correct* account of the matter for, as he sees it, there is no correct account to be offered.

It is in the light of this problem that one must approach the argument of the opening section of Book 2 of *Adversus haereses*: the argument, that is, whose focus is the issue of the identity of God. That argument, as scholars have frequently noted, is in form a piece of purely negative polemic. Scriptural exegesis has no apparent part in it. Rather, Irenaeus draws on the techniques of contemporary rhetoric to underscore what he takes to be the incoherence of his adversaries' story. In principle, then, *Adversus haereses* 2 is simply a ground-clearing operation:

it is intended not so much to settle the argument in all its dimensions once for all as to establish the pointlessness of the sort of speculation represented by the gnostic account of transactions in the Overworld of the Fullness. Nevertheless, Irenaeus announces firmly the basic assumption that his assessment of the speculative propensities of his gnostics requires. His *gravamen* is nicely stated at *Adversus haereses* 3.24.2:

> For they blaspheme the Demiurge—which is to say, the one who is truly God, who confers the power of discovery—and think that they have found another God above God or another Fullness or another dispensation.

The real God, then, Irenaeus thinks, is the one whose role in the elaborate Ptolemaean myth of fall and redemption is that of the Demiurge—the "Artisan" of Genesis 1. By contrast, the God whom his opponents figure as the Depth that is the origin of all things is no more than a dream, an unreal "God beyond God." Like the spiritual world, the Pleroma, to which he gives rise, this God is a product of their own addicted devotion to "searching" (ζήτησις) beyond the limits of human knowledge and, indeed, of reality. Irenaeus' task is to dismantle this fictional kosmos together with the fictional Deity who is alleged to be responsible for it, to the honor of the Creator of heaven and earth, whom his opponents dishonor.

Thus the error of the Valentinians, as Irenaeus sees it, is twofold. It encompasses both a blasphemy and an illusion. The blasphemy consists in the association of the Creator God with evil. The Marcionites, he acknowledges, are the worst in this respect: they envisage the Creator as the originator of evil. The Valentinians take a slightly more tolerable line: in their view the Creator originates almost nothing, but is nevertheless himself the product or consequence of an *error*—an evil, if inevitable, event, namely, Sophia's unfortunate lusting after knowledge of the infinite Depth (*Haer.* 3.12.12). In the end, though, the difference matters little. Both groups denigrate the Creator (and in consequence the creation).

The second charge, that of illusion, grows out of Irenaeus' critique of his opponents' cosmogonies, and, as we have seen, out of his assessment of gnostic "seeking" or "inquiry." The supreme God of the Valentinian system and the οἰκονομία of the Fullness represent, for him, so many pipe dreams. Irenaeus might, of course, have read Valentinian speculation differently. It would certainly have been possible for him to defend the churches' ordinary catechesis by arguing that it is the Demiurge, the

Artisan-God, and his Mother who are the theological supernumeraries in the Valentinian system. But Irenaeus was interested in *this* world, and he was, moreover, obsessed by the thought that his opponents rendered its Creator as an inferior—indeed as a less than truly divine—being. When, therefore, he speaks of "God," he wants to mean the One that fills the role or the place of the Valentinian Demiurge and to insist, in agreement with his adversaries, that it is this being who, when rightly conceived, is the unique God of whom the whole Scriptural tradition explicitly speaks (*Haer.* 2.28.4). It is on this ground that he dismisses in principle the entire "upstairs" of the gnostic kosmos, and along with it the supreme Deity which it presupposed.

The difficulty with this stance is apparent. In the Ptolemaean myth—and others of its sort—the Artisan of the visible kosmos is not, to speak in a figure, a "candidate" for the job of being God in the proper sense of that word. He is an ignorant product of the Second Wisdom's passion, and no more therefore than a "psychic" type. He is not even aware of the reality of a spiritual Overworld, much less of the infinite Depth in which that world is grounded. Hence, when Irenaeus turns to the issue that he calls the "*primum et maximum capitulum*"—the issue of to whom and to what the word "God" refers—what he has actually to engage is the Ptolemaeans' portrayal of the figure that they had called "Father before the Father," and "Silent Depth." Moreover, he must treat this figure not as the fiction he wants to make of it, but as a reality that has been falsely portrayed or misunderstood: in short he must—tacitly at least—admit that he and his opponents are talking about the same, entirely real, "thing," even though they are not saying the same things about it. Thus, it comes to pass that Irenaeus' actual procedure in dealing with the question of God is at odds with the set of assumptions on which his announced program of rebuttal is based.

If that is the case, however, then it must also be the case that at some level he and his opponents share an agenda. Disagree—and disagree significantly and seriously—they may; but they will share a set of questions and a theological idiom in which those questions can be asked and answered. Irenaeus indeed drops an occasional clue to the character of that idiom. For example, he can allege, surprisingly, when one considers his general attitude towards "philosophy" (the philosophers, he says tersely, were "ignorant of God" [*Haer.* 2.14.2]) that, "Plato … is more religious than these [gnostics]" (*Haer.* 3.25.5), a point to which he cites both *Laws* 715E and, even more interestingly,

Timaeus 29E: "He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything"—a much-quoted remark that Irenaeus takes, and rightly, to refer to the (Platonic) Demiurge, and therefore in principle to the very Creator God of Genesis 1 in whose defense he writes. No doubt he had his problems with Platonism; for he alleges that Plato falsely taught that there are three first principles, "Matter and the παράδειγμα[2] and God" (*Haer.* 2.14.3). This charge, if partially qualified, was true enough of the Middle Platonists of his own time,[3] though not of Plato himself; and Irenaeus thinks he detects a version of this teaching in the Ptolemaean myth, as we shall see. Presumably, then, he was not wholly ignorant of contemporary Platonist thinking about the Divine, but had an acquaintance with the Platonism of his day that went beyond hearsay report and was engaged to one degree or another in a mental debate with it. Nor is this surprising, since he seems to be acquainted with the writings of Justin Martyr and others in whose persons a Platonist tradition had already surfaced in Christian circles. On the other hand, this Platonism of his seems to have come to him (and to his gnostics) partially wrapped, as it were, in notions of a different provenance: it bore traces of the sort of neo-Pythagoreanism that had spiced the thought of Philo of Alexandria. At the same time it carried with it certain teachings and emphases that stemmed more from (a no doubt Hellenized) Judaism than from any proper philosophical sect.

Thus, as it turned out, there was at least one issue—the most important of all in his mind—that compelled Irenaeus to get tangled up in the very sorts of speculative questions he charges his opponents with pursuing; and this was the question of the identity of God.

To show how, and to what extent, this is so, the easiest path is to look closely at Irenaeus' definition of what he took to be involved in this question—the question of "God the Demiurge, who made heaven and earth and everything that is in them." In *Adversus haereses* 2.1.1, he explicitly specifies two aims of his polemic. It is necessary, he thinks, to show (a) that "there is nothing above him or beneath him, and (b) that he was not impelled by another agent but made all things freely and of his own will."[4] In a final sentence, he rephrases these two propositions:

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[2] The Latin is *exemplum* ("model"), and the reference is to the realm of Ideas or Forms.

[3] See Alcinous, *Didask.* 9.1.

[4] "… ostendere … quoniam neque super eum neque post eum est aliquid, neque ab aliquo motus sed sua sententia et libere fecit omnia."

God the Creator (a) is "the only one that encloses (continens) all things and (b) supplies all things with being" (*Haer.* 2.1.1). In the first instance, then, Irenaeus envisages himself as defending the uniqueness of God as Creator.

Consider first Irenaeus' statement that the true Demiurge "was not impelled by another agent, but made all things freely and of his own will." This denial was, of course, evoked by the portrait of the psychic "Artisan" provided by the Ptolemaean myth. This Demiurge—formed out of the "passion" manifested in the fallen but redeemed Sophia's "turning-back" (epistrophê), that is, her (laudable) desire to revert to the spiritual realm of the Pleroma (*Haer.* 1.5.1)—was in consequence of this origin composed of psychic substance. When the time came for the formation of a material world, it was again this second Sophia, his Mother, by whom he was immediately "moved" to this action, thus becoming the Father of psychic beings and the Artisan of material things. His Mother, indeed, controlled what he did. It was she who induced him to shape the beings of this visible world as "images" of the Æons of the Pleroma (which thus appear in a role not unlike that of the Platonic Ideas). His Mother, however, was not the originator of this impulse to shape a perceptible kosmos; for the Savior himself had initiated that undertaking—not in a "hands-on" manner, to be sure, but dunamei, that is, "virtually." The visible creation may have been, at least as far as its material component is concerned, the detritus, and the termination, of the process by which being proceeds from the originating Depth. But its formation nevertheless conforms to the proposition laid down at Colossians 1:16 that "all things" come, in the final analysis, from the "the first-born of all creation," the Æon, Onlybegotten, of whom the Savior is a representative actualization.

It is entirely true, then, as Irenaeus alleges, that the Demiurge of the Ptolemaean myth does not create of his own will and freely. On the other hand, his opponents had perfectly valid explanation of this, and in another place Irenaeus himself in effect supplies it (*Haer.* 2.2.3): namely, that the Demiurge in their scheme of things is not the agent to whom the origination of the world is properly attributed. Irenaeus wants to argue that attribution of the visible world's creation to lower, intermediary beings (angels, for example) does not exempt the ultimate God (whom here he tacitly accepts as the only Being who can reasonably fill the role of the Demiurge in the Ptolemaean myth) from responsibility for the defects of the perceptible kosmos. Employing the

nice example of a man who uses an axe to chop wood, he observes, "We do not say that it is the axe which chops the wood … but that the man chops the wood." This argument would make perfect sense if, like him, his gnostics believed that God is possessed of free will—"*liberae sententiae est Deus*" (*Haer.* 4.37.4, cf. 2.5.4). For them, however, the process by which the visible creation emerges was one of emanation, in which the outflow of being involves a more or less automatic thinning, as it were, of being's blood. The degeneration of Spirit into Soul and the by-production of matter are inevitabilities in such a view. It is not, then, the fault of the Artisan that he is ignorant and merely psychic; and indeed it might be claimed that his work of ordering the soul and body elements into a kosmos is an essential contribution to the redemptive reintegration that completes and justifies the procession of being. Logically speaking, then, Irenaeus' argument is correct, and, rhetorically speaking, it is certainly effective; but it is curiously beside the point.

There is however an excellent reason for this irrelevance. For once, at any rate, in setting out this line of argument, Irenaeus is not arguing in a purely negative spirit. He is not dismantling a gnostic position so much as he is back-handedly asserting or commending his own view of what a real "Demiurge" must be and how such a being must be related to the created order. This is plain enough not merely from his complaint that the Ptolemaean Demiurge does not act on his own initiative, but also from his evident concern to assert as a matter of principle that a proper creator *cannot* be indifferent to what his action produces, "whether it turns out be to a bad thing or a good thing" (*utrumnam male an bene fiant*, *Haer.* 1.2.1). What this irrelevant argument makes manifest, then, is not so much the absurdity of the gnostic position as it is the real gnostic equivalent of his own Creator God: namely, that very "Silent Depth" whom he initially repudiates as a fiction. Irenaeus' real question about the identity of God does not, save rhetorically, concern the Demiurge. His question is what the Silent Depth of Ptolemaean myth would have to look like if he were truly to be the ultimate Source and Father of all things.

In responding to this question, Irenaeus initially confines himself to establishing the first part of his double assertion (*Haer.* 2.1.1): the proposition, namely, that God has "nothing above him or beneath him," or stated alternatively, that he "encloses all things." He opens his argument with a rhetorical question that in effect summarizes the criticism he is about to spell out:

> How can there be another Fullness or another Beginning or another Power or another God above this one, since it is necessary that God, the Fullness of everything, enclose [*circumcontinere*] everything within his unmeasured ⟨being⟩ and be enclosed by none? (*Haer.* 2.1.2.)

This formula, "enclosing … not enclosed," is one that came to Irenaeus with a pedigree.[5] It was known in Valentinian circles (*Haer.* 1.1.1). He himself, however, quotes the *Shepherd of Hermas* as his authority: "First of all believe that God is one, who established and ordered all things and made all things to exist from a state of non-existence, who contains (*capax*) all things and is contained (*capiatur*) by none."[6] Irenaeus cites this passage with the formula, "*scriptura … dicit.*" He might equally well have cited Theophilus of Antioch,[7] however, or, as Clement of Alexandria would do, *The Preaching of Peter.*[8] It is true that all these authors, including Hermas, use the Greek verb χωρεῖν ("contain"), while Irenaeus, in *Adversus haereses* 2.1, seems for the most part to employ περιέχειν,[9] thus following the example of Philo of Alexandria; but the thought is the same in either case. The God who "contains" or "encloses" all things is the One who confers being on everything that exists, is universally and even uniformly present to creatures, and is greater than any other being. In using this language, then, Irenaeus is appealing to an accepted principle, one that he shares with his opponents, and one whose meaning is well established.

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[5] For this point and for much of what follows, I am indebted to W.R. Schoedel, "'Topological Theology' and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honor of Alexander Böhlig* (ed. M. Krause; Leiden: Brill, 1972); and W.R. Schoedel, "Enclosing not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (ed. W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilken; *Théologie Historique* 54; Paris: Beauchesne, 1979).

[6] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.2, citing *Mandate* 1.1 (cf. Lake, LCL). *Capax* renders the Greek χωρῶν, and *capiatur* renders ἀχώρητος.

[7] See Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 2.3: "But it is characteristic of the Most High and Almighty God … not only to be everywhere but to 'look upon everything and hear everything' [*Od.* xi.108], and not to be confined in a place; otherwise the place containing him would be greater than he is, for what contains is greater than what is contained. God is not contained but is himself the locus of the universe" (trans. R.M. Grant, *Ad Autolycum libri tres* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1970], 25).

[8] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.5.39: "Know therefore that there is one God, who made the beginning of all things and possesses the power of the end … the invisible One who sees everything, the uncontained who contains all things, the One who needs nothing, of whom all things have need and through whom they exist."

[9] Irenaeus' Latin translator appears to render *periechein* by *continere* or *circumcontinere*, and χωρεῖν by forms of *capere.*

The formula first appears however, in Jewish sources, that is, in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, who employs it repeatedly, almost as a mantra, and in whose works its use may well be connected with traditional Jewish skepticism about the possibility of "seeing" God, and about the wisdom of claims to know God's Name. Philo argues, for example, that the reason why Adam supposed he could hide from God (Gen 3:8), is that, being evil, he imagined that "God is in a place, not enclosing but enclosed."[10] The fallen Adam, then, envisages God in an idolatrous manner, that is, as being spatially limited like a creature. In fact, however, it is human beings and other such creatures, not God, that have a "where;" and this is made evident when God asks Adam, "Where are you?" The divine query shows that "God has no 'where,' since he is not enclosed but encloses the All; while that which has come into existence is in a place because it is of necessity enclosed but does not enclose."[11]

The point, then, of Irenaeus' insistence that "God, the Fullness of everything, encloses [*circumcontinere*] everything within his unmeasured being and is enclosed by none" becomes clear. He believes, as his query attests, that the word "God" properly denotes that which is "the Fullness of everything" and must therefore "contain all things." Moreover, he is aware that the language of "enclosing" or "containing" is an idiom employed by his opponents. So, in taking it up, he has the pleasure of turning one of their own guns on them. For from these premises it follows (a) that if, in the Valentinian cosmogony, there is something outside the being called "God" (*extra illum*), the word "God" has been misapplied; and hence (b) that God cannot have "a beginning, a middle, and an end" (*Haer.* 2.1.2), but must be unlimited. When, however, one inspects the Valentinian ὑπόθεσις it becomes immediately apparent that "there exists, on their account of the matter, something which they assert to be outside the Fullness,"[12] and hence presumably outside of God. But if this is so,

> it is altogether necessary either that what falls outside *encloses* while the Fullness *is enclosed* … or else they—that is to say, both the Fullness and that which is outside it—will stand infinitely apart from each other and be separated from each other (*Haer.* 2.1.3).

[10] Philo, *Leg.* 3.6.
[11] *Leg.* 3.51; cf. Gen 3:9.
[12] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.1.3: "aliud quid quod quidem extra pleroma esse dicunt."

What this argument wants to establish, when taken at its face value, is that in the Valentinian kosmos there is, strictly speaking, nothing to which the title "God" can properly be applied. Neither the ultimate Father nor the psychic Demiurge (who is "outside" the Fullness) qualifies for the title, since on Irenaeus' view neither encloses the other but is limited by it. Even though Irenaeus makes this point in a tone that is purely polemical, there can be little doubt that he is fully aware of the implications of what he is saying. He points out that on the Valentinian (or Marcionite) theory, there will in effect be two Gods, each with its own creation, its own territory, to tend.

> For it must be the case *either* that there is one [Deity] who contains all things and who, among the things that belong to him [*in suis*], made whatever was made in accordance with his own design; *or else* that there is an unlimited multitude of Makers and Gods, each of which starts where another comes to its limit, and so [that] … not one of the lot of these deities is God. For each of them will lack the epithet "almighty," since each will possess but the smallest of shares in comparison with the rest taken all together, and the style "almighty" will disappear. (*Haer.* 2.1.5)[13]

From this we gather not only that Irenaeus reads his opponents' ὑπόθεσις as commending a form of polytheism—that is, as affirming for all practical purposes that none of its referents for the word "God" is a true ultimate—but also that the formula "enclosing all things … [but] not enclosed," which he thus employs as a touchstone of monotheism, is closely associated in his mind with the fact that God is supremely *powerful* and that the divine power extends—and logically must extend—to all that exists.

For the Christians who followed Philo's lead, then, the formula "enclosing … not enclosed" adumbrates a difference of ontological status: that, namely, between the creative Source of all things and the beings to whom it supplies existence. Thus, to say that God "encloses but is not enclosed" means that God is unique in being at once "everywhere and nowhere;" and if this seems paradoxical, Philo had already explained the point:

> [God is] nowhere because, on the one hand, he himself generated space and place along with bodies, while, on the other, it is irreverent to to say that the one who did the making is enclosed within any of the things that have come to be. Yet [God is] everywhere because he has extended his

[13] For my translation of the final sentence, see the note in Rousseau, SC 293:206.

> powers through earth and water as well as air and heaven and has left no portion of the kosmos empty.[14]

There is, then, a distinction to be made: between the "powers" of God and God's "being" (τό εἶναι). The former, which Philo identifies with the divine "goodness,"[15] interfuse the kosmos. But God's being cannot be characterized by epithets that imply location or change of location, since God may seem to be "demonstrable and comprehensible," but in fact "transcends things that have come to be" in virtue of being prior to—which is to say, presupposed in—any act of demonstration or mental conception.[16]

Philo, therefore, in developing the rabbinic doctrine that God is the "place" of all things,[17] mounts a polemic against pagan understanding of the cosmic "system" as ultimate—a view which would in effect locate God or the gods *within* that spatiotemporal system and thus render the divine finite.[18] The formula "enclosing … not enclosed" thus intends not only to defend monotheism (since there can be only one reality that "contains" everything), but also to assert that the categories of finite existence—spatial location, for example—do not fit God. As the transcendent originator of the world-system, God cannot be grasped by concepts that are shaped to suit creaturely ways of being.

By appealing to the formula "enclosing … not enclosed," then, Irenaeus too wants to insist that the only reality to which the style "God" properly belongs is not one being among others but (as we might say) the infinite context of all finite realities. It remains to indicate what, for him, seems to follow from this characterization, or at any rate to be connoted by it—and first, with regard to the divine nature itself. In this connection, Irenaeus is thoroughly unoriginal, but at the same time interestingly so, in that he betrays his indebtedness to the same theological traditions on which his opponents drew in their account of the ultimate divine Depth.

Irenaeus knows that his adversaries describe the ultimate Deity, the "perfect Æon," as dwelling in "the invisible and unnamable heights," as "uncontained and invisible, eternal and non-originate;" that they characterize him as "Depth," "Beginning before the Beginning," and

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[14] Philo, *Conf.* 136.
[15] *Migr.* 183. Philo's term is ἀγαθότης.
[16] *Conf.* 138.
[17] See Schoedel, "'Topological Theology'," 97, with the references there.
[18] See Philo's interesting argument against "the Chaldaeans" in *Migr.* 178–181.

"Father before the Father." Moreover, he knows that all these epithets contrast God not, in the first instance, with the visible kosmos, but with the spiritual realm itself, the Pleroma (cf. *Haer.* 1.1.1). He has the status, then, of that which Plato had once described as "beyond Being."

This sort of language, which characterizes the ultimate Ground of things in negative terms calculated to exempt it from the categories of either the intelligible or the perceptible realms, seems to have originated with Neo-Pythagorean writers of the first or second centuries BCE. From them it appears to have been taken over into Alexandrian Middle Platonism,[19] whence it passed not merely to Philo but into the traditions inherited by later gnostics, Christian and non-Christian.[20] No doubt, it was through Philo that this apophatic idiom came to be associated with the "containing/uncontained" formula; for in its native Middle Platonic form the latter element was missing, as is evident from the language of a well-known passage in Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* 10.4:

> As I said, [the God] is ineffable and is grasped by Intellect alone. For he is neither genus nor species nor difference, nor does anything happen to him by accident. He is not evil (for it would be irreligious to say so), nor good (for this he would be by participation in something, *viz*., the Good), nor indifferent (for this is not consonant with the idea of [the God] either). He is not marked by quality (for he has not been "qualified" and made to be what he is by some quality), nor without quality (for he does not lack any quality that might be added to him). He is not a part of anything, nor like a whole that possesses parts; nor is he the same as anything or different from anything (for no accident pertains to him that would enable him to be set apart from other things). He is neither mover nor moved.

Irenaeus, too, is familiar with this apophatic idiom, and has no doubt perceived its presence in gnostic sources, with which he was acquainted. He clearly thinks, however, that his adversaries' cosmogony lends itself to a charge of inconsistency by the manner in which it employs this language. It speaks of the ultimate Depth in negative terms, to be sure, but at the same time, he believes, employs this negative language in a way that in effect "finitizes" the ultimate God. Thus he argues that

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[19] See: J.M. Dillon, "The Transcendence of God in Philo: Some Possible Sources" *Protocol of the Sixteenth Colloquy of The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture* (Berkeley, Calif.: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1975).

[20] On gnostic use of apophatic language, see the illuminating article of J.P. Kenney, "Ancient Apophatic Theology," in J.D. Turner and R. Majercik, eds., *Gnosticism and Later Platonism* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 259–276.

because his adversaries count the First Deity as (merely) one member of the "first-begotten Pythagorean Tetrad" (*Haer.* 1.1.1), they reckon him "whom none contains with the things that are contained by him" (*Haer.* 2.12.1). This charge moreover fits in nicely with his basic contention that in the Valentinian scheme neither the ultimate Deity nor the Demiurge truly qualifies for the title "God."[21] Hence, Irenaeus is eager, for his part, not only to insist, with the apophatic tradition he too has inherited, that the real God is genuinely "beyond" the kosmos; but he is equally eager to point out what he takes to be significant defects in his opponents' handling of this theme.

For reasons that are not hard to seek, Irenaeus is at odds with the Valentinian custom of describing the ultimate God with the unqualified epithet "unknown." He recollects that in the Ptolemaean myth it was desire for knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the ultimate Ground of things that constituted Sophia's original sin. The resultant discord and disorder in the Pleroma was corrected only when the Æons of the spiritual realm had been instructed that there can be no direct, unmediated knowledge of the First God, save of course the knowledge that he is unenclosed and incomprehensible. What can be known of God is neither more nor less than this truth, which the Onlybegotten Son (Intellect) mediates (*Haer.* 1.2.5). Irenaeus himself, it must be said, speaks in much the same terms—and indeed is bound to do so by the testimony of the Gospel texts to which his opponents' language indirectly alludes, that is, Matthew 11:27 and John 1:18. God, he says, is unknown as far as his greatness is concerned; but, he adds firmly, God is known through his love—meaning, of course, the love that reaches human beings through the incarnation of God's only-begotten Son (*Haer.* 4.20.1; cf. 4.20.4; 4.6.1). This, moreover, appears to reiterate a form of the position taken by Philo of Alexandria, who, as we have seen, can distinguish between God in himself and God's "powers" or "goodness." Irenaeus, nevertheless, seems to go a further step. He contemplates a final state of affairs in which human beings will indeed have an unmediated "vision" of God, a vision that confers immortality and incorruptibility (cf. *Haer.* 4.20.5; 4.9.2). This state of affairs is brought about by the incarnation and by the indwelling of the Spirit, which "accustom" God and creature to dwell together (cf. *Haer.* 3.17.1; 4.14.2). To be sure, he insists there is always a "more" to God that the creature in its finitude must ever be

[21] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.9.3: "neutrum eorum ponunt esse perfectum et comprehendentem omnia."

receiving; a transcendent goodness that is never exhausted. Even in the age to come, God will always be teaching and humanity learning (*Haer.* 2.28.3), and hence it will remain true that God, even as "seen" face to face, is in his "greatness" always beyond human knowledge. Nevertheless Paul was surely right, Irenaeus thinks, when he said that though now "we see by means of a mirror in an enigma," the time would indeed come when, like Moses, we should see God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12; cf. *Haer.* 4.9.2).

Irenaeus, then, would no doubt have agreed with Philo, who characterizes God as "transcending virtue, transcending knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), transcending the good itself and the beautiful itself."[22] So understood, God cannot be a "such-and-such," that is, cannot fit into the categories employed to classify things or circumstances that belong to the world of ordinary experience. Hence, as Alcinous says, God is intrinsically ἄποιος (non-such)[23] and, by consequence, incapable of being grasped conceptually, ἀκατάληπτος.[24] Irenaeus simply reproduces this line of thought (though not, one supposes, as a consequence of having read Philo). He insists that God is not only invisible (a term which he seems regularly to understand in its most pedestrian sense, of ordinary rather than intellectual vision), but also inexplicable (*inenarrabilis*: *Haer.* 4.20.6) and incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτος: *Haer.* 4.20.5), both because of the divine greatness (*magnitudo*) and because of the fact that God is without measure or limit.[25] Thus, for Irenaeus as for his opponents, God is infinite, but—and in this he is something of a revisionist—in his case this epithet has positive and not merely negative connotations. It means—and this is a point to which I shall return—that God's resources are unlimited and God's goodness, inexhaustible:[26] or, in other words, it connotes not merely God's *difference* from the finite order but also God's effective *presence* for and in it.

This infinite and unfathomable God, since he encloses and grounds everything, has nothing prior to him, whether logically or chronologically. Hence, he is himself ungrounded: or, in the language of later Platonism, ἀγέν(ν)ητος ("ingenerate").[27] Irenaeus' translator renders this

[22] Philo, *Opif.* 8.
[23] Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 3.36, 3.206.
[24] Cf. Philo, *Post.* 16.
[25] E.g. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.1: "impossibile est enim mensurari Patrem."
[26] E.g. *Haer.* 3.10.6: "multus … et dives Pater."
[27] Again, this term is commonplace in Philo: see, for example, *Leg.* 3. 96, *Post.* 28. It is apparently in Hellenistic-Jewish and Christian tradition that the epithet was used

term into Latin as *innatus* or *infectus*[28] indifferently, and Irenaeus employs it regularly to contrast Creator and creature, the latter of which "comes to be," while God is ever "equal and like to himself" (*Haer.* 4.11.2), "self-sufficient" and "without beginning or end" (*Haer.* 3.8.3). The non-generate God, then, who "contains all things," does not undergo change or alteration and is (therefore) incorruptible.[29]

This picture of God as the self-sufficient source of all being indicates clearly enough what Irenaeus means when he asserts that "there is nothing above [God] or beneath him," and that the Creator is "the only one that contains all things." By this language he understands himself to be at once reasserting and explicating the Pauline principle of "one God the Father, from whom are all things" (1 Cor 8:6). This account in turn, however, provides a key to the way he characterizes the relation of Creator to creature. First, his language makes it perfectly clear that if the creation comes to be, its Creator does not. God is above all "non-generate" (ἀγέν(ν)ητος). Justin Martyr, too (and not Justin alone) had employed this term to express God's transcendence and uniqueness.[30] For Irenaeus, it directly entails a certain view of the character of what God creates, and in this way illuminates what Irenaeus intends by his second principle, that God "made all things freely and by his own will," and "supplies all things with being."

The meaning of this privative term depends on that of its contrary, γεν(ν)ητός. In the philosophical discourse of the day, the latter referred to anything that has "come into being" and thus has some sort of a "beginning." And since it was thought that what comes into being is bound at some point to pass out of it, the character of being γεν(ν)ητός was closely associated with that of being φθαρτός (corruptible, subject to dissolution). If God is, then, the only reality that is non-generate, and for this reason non-mortal and non-corruptible, what God brings into being is, *ex hypothesi*, the contrary of this.

Irenaeus dilates frequently upon this contrast, and nowhere more eloquently than when he is embroidering John 1:1–3.

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exclusively of the ultimate God: see Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 5.4: God alone is ingenerate and incorruptible, and that is why he is God.

[28] E.g. *Haer.* 4.38.1, where (a) ἀεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντι καὶ ἀγενήτῳ comes out *cum semper sit idem et innatus*; but then (b) four lines later ἀγένητα becomes *infecta*.

[29] Again see Philo, *Sacr.* 101, *Cher.* 52 for these associations.

[30] See Justin, *Dial.* 5.4: "μόνος γὰρ ἀγέννητος καὶ ἄφθαρτος ὁ θεός."

> For he himself is non-generate and without beginning and without end and in need of nothing. He is sufficient for himself and, more than that, he furnishes all other beings with existence itself. On the other hand, the things made by him have had a beginning; but things that have had a beginning are also capable of undergoing dissolution and are in a state of dependence and stand in need of the one who made them. (*Haer.* 3.8.3)

There is, then, a radical distinction to be made between God the Creator and *any* creature: their ways of being are different. Commenting on Genesis 1:28 ("Increase and multiply"), Irenaeus stresses the mutability of the human creature as over against God. "The one who makes is always the same, but that which is made has to have at once a beginning and a middling state and a maturity." That is why the human being—a point which Irenaeus will develop at length in his positive teaching—"undergoes progress and increase towards God" (*Haer.* 4.11.2).

This ontological difference between Creator and creature sets Irenaeus' theological vision sharply apart from that of his opponents. They had employed—and with remarkable consistency—the images of *birth* or of *emanation* to explain the world's generation. What these two images have in common is the assumption that a source and what it produces—the parent and its offspring, the light and its radiance—are *the same sort of thing* even if they actualize their common character in varying degrees. The Valentinians emphasized this presupposition by speaking of spiritual substances on the one hand, and psychic substances on the other, as ὁμούσιοι with the others of their kind.[31] It is this assumption, moreover, that occasions the most obvious difficulty in the Valentinian cosmogony: that, namely, of explaining how, from spiritual or divine substance, there can somehow be "born" two thoroughly *other* sorts of thing, that is, psychic and material substance. This problematic transition is dramatized, and by so much rendered plausible, by the account of Sophia's disordered impulse. That impulse *produces* a "passion" (πάθος) which, though spiritually begotten, is alien to the divine world and hence is extruded from it to constitute the stuff of the visible kosmos.

Now Irenaeus, like Philo, is perfectly at home with the language of birth and of emanation. He can even talk of God's "bringing forth"

[31] On this use of *homoousios*, see Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 190–201.

matter[32]—though one wonders whether this way of speaking may not be deliberately calculated to produce shock in his gnostic readers. Nevertheless it is plain that he has repudiated the assumption which underlies such language, and for two reasons. First, he thinks it logically impossible for the creative Source to give off, as it were, some portion of itself so as to constitute a *separate* reality of the same kind as itself. However, he also thinks that it is logically impossible for God to constitute in being a different sort of reality—a *creature*—that is like God in being non-generate (with all that "being non-generate" implies).

The first of these contentions turns primarily on Irenaeus' insistence upon the simplicity or perfect integrity of God. He also defends it along another line in *Adversus haereses* 2.17.1 ff. There he argues that if the (lesser) Æons are proper offspring and therefore "the same sort of thing" (ὁμούσιοι) as their Parent, it is impossible to understand how "passion" found its way into the Fullness—and at the same time difficult to understand how the Æons can be pictured as a multitude of separate individuals (*Haer.* 2.17.3). Irenaeus works a number of variations on these arguments in *Adversus haereses* 2.17. In the end, they come down to a single thesis: that the coming-to-be of the world cannot consistently be conceived on the model of a "procession" of being from its Source, whether in the form of birth or of emanation. This is partly because God is indivisible, and partly because neither the Ptolemaeans' invisible kosmos nor the visible kosmos of our experience can qualify as a "like" proceeding from its divine "like."

The second of his contentions Irenaeus develops most clearly at *Adversus haereses* 4.38.1. There he is confronted with the question why God could not "make the human race perfect from the beginning." The term "perfect" here (the Greek is τέλιος) might better, perhaps, be rendered "mature." What is lurking in the back of Irenaeus' mind, and presumably in that of his questioner, is the sort of language Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 2:6 or 14:20, where "perfect" implies being *spiritual* rather than merely psychic or carnal, and "spiritual," in turn, implies being in some fashion or degree divine (cf. "God is spirit," John 4:24). Irenaeus, as we shall see, is not averse to the use of such language, but his first response to his questioner is simply to reiterate the principle that something that comes to be cannot have or share the characteristics of the non-generate God *in virtue of its own original character*. The human

[32] See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.28.7: "Hoc autem idem et de substantia materiae dicentes, non peccabimus, quoniam Deus eam protulit."

creature, in other words, cannot possess such perfection in its "natural" state, even if, as Paul says, human persons can, in the end, "put on" such divine characteristics as immortality and incorruptibility (1 Cor 15:23). Hence, the things that the Creator brings into being cannot *as such* be "the same sort of thing" as God: they are not divine emanations or offspring but always remain, in the strict sense, creatures.

Irenaeus from the start, then, chooses to narrow the connotation of "coming to be." In the ordinary parlance of the time, there were a number of ways in which things could be said to come to be, that is, to derive from a source on which they were dependent for their existence. They could be born, or fashioned, or flow out (like a stream of water from a fountain), or be uttered (like a word). But where the relation between God the Creator and the beings he creates is concerned, Irenaeus deliberately excludes metaphors that entail continuity or community of being. Creation means bringing into being things that are ontologically *other* than God; and this is what the term γεν(ν)ητός normally implies for him.

If this is the answer to the question of *what it is that God brings into being*, the next obvious question is how Irenaeus conceives God's relation to such creatures in the act of creation? If he sets aside images of birth and emanation, what image does he substitute for them, and what does this image imply about the continuing relation between Creator and creatures?

Here again, the key to his teaching lies in the picture of God sketched above, and above all in the seriousness with which he takes the traditional teaching about the self-sufficiency of God and the formula that God is not "needy" (*indigens*). In his polemic against his opponents' cosmogony, this principle is put to work in three separate connections, in each of which Irenaeus clarifies his understanding of the act of creation. This polemic has, however, an unexpected focus. Since Irenaeus considers that his critique of gnostic theology must concern itself with the figure of the Demiurge, and because he continues to pretend that the figure of the ultimate God in Valentinian myth must be ignored as a fictional superfluity, he defines his understanding of God's creative activity by attacking—or better, by carefully revising—the Platonist theory of the "three principles" of God, Model or Idea, and Matter; for it is this that he sees at work in gnostic accounts of the Demiurge's work of creation.[33]

[33] It needs to be made clear that like the later Neoplatonists, the majority of Middle

In the first place, then, Irenaeus mounts an attack against the Valentinian teaching that the Fullness is the model or archetype of the visible world, the equivalent of the Platonic forms or ideas. His favorite argument is one that appeals to the problem of an infinite regress. If, he asks, the Demiurge fashioned the visible kosmos to reflect the form of the Fullness, whence did the ultimate Source itself derive the form or idea (*figura*) of the Fullness (*Haer.* 2.16.1)? This question Irenaeus can restate in yet another form:

> If the creation is an image of the realities [on high], what prevents one from saying that they in turn are images of things higher than themselves, and latter, in turn, of things yet higher, and so from running off into infinite images of images?[34]

What prevents Irenaeus' opponents from saying this, of course, is—or ought to be—plain. It is that the regress, in Valentinian thought, stops with the ultimate Depth, because the latter is itself the truth that is articulated in the Fullness. Irenaeus' opponents affirm, in the end, the same view that he espouses: the ultimate God is the groundless ground of all things. Indeed, Irenaeus in effect acknowledges this; for he envisages his gnostics as replying that Depth was perfectly capable of conceiving the original of the Fullness on his own.[35]

Why then does Irenaeus persist in this apparently pointless argument? For three reasons at least: the first is that he has already shown, at least to his own satisfaction, that the Ptolemaean Depth cannot qualify as an ultimate. Indeed, it is in this connection that he originally alleges that the gnostic "system" entails an infinite regress—not of cosmic models but of Gods (*Haer.* 2.1.3). The second is that the image of infinite regress corresponds nicely with his analysis and criticism of gnostic "seeking" (ζήτησις) as an endless process, which never arrives anywhere and is therefore not merely dangerous but superfluous. The search for the spiritual archetype of the visible kosmos is like the search for a God above the Creator: it leads nowhere. The final reason is

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Platonists did not believe that Plato's Myth in the *Timaeus* contemplated an actual "creation" of the κόσμος. They took it that the κόσμος is eternal, and that Plato's description of its "making" is merely a convenient way of showing its structures and elements—how it is put together. Thus, Alcinous denies that the *kosmos* is γενητός in the sense of that term which implies an origin in time (*Didask.* 14.3).

[34] Cf. *Haer.* 2.7.5.

[35] "Si autem licuit Bytho a semetipso talem figurationem Pleromatis perficere . . ." (*Haer.* 2.7.5).

intimated by his very response to the suggestion that the ultimate God is the source of his own "model" kosmos. Irenaeus answers it, in effect, with a question. If the infinite Depth can contrive a model for the spiritual kosmos, why cannot the Demiurge be conceived as contriving one independently for the visible kosmos? And what this question, which must have seemed odd to any Ptolemaean who understood his own mythology, suggests is the assumption that lies at the base of Irenaeus' position: that the entire Valentinian Overworld is supernumerary and dispensable. It multiplies entities beyond necessity.

Irenaeus of course reinforces this point with other, not entirely uninteresting, arguments. He dwells, for example, in *Adversus haereses* 2.7, on the fact that the visible kosmos is in various ways *different* from the gnostic Fullness, and on the basis of this circumstance he questions his opponents' account of the relation between them. If the visible kosmos is temporal and corruptible, whereas the Fullness is eternal and incorruptible, it can hardly be thought that the Savior established the former as an image intended to "honor" the latter (*Haer.* 2.7.1). And again: if the Demiurge is to be conceived as the "image" of Intellect, and the Demiurge is ignorant of all that is above him, must not an analogous "spiritual" ignorance be attributed to Onlybegotten himself (*Haer.* 2.7.2)? And further still: how can a mere thirty Eons provide models for a world of creatures "so varied, so many, so innumerable"—not excluding creatures that are "ferocious … hurtful, and destructive" (*Haer.* 2.7.3)? In general, Irenaeus thinks it is difficult to see how things that are "corruptible, earthly, composite, and transient" can be images of their contraries (*Haer.* 2.7.6).

Much more likely, then, in Irenaeus' mind, is the converse hypothesis: that the gnostic Fullness is a construction of human ingenuity and has the visible kosmos as its model (*Haer.* 2.15.1–3). If, though, the visible kosmos is in fact the *original*, then the Valentinian Overworld is indeed superfluous and pointless. There is no archetypical kosmos, but only the kosmos that the Creator in fact determined to create. In this way, Irenaeus returns to his original point: God had no need of a "model" kosmos external to himself (*alienis archetypes*, *Haer.* 2.7.5). Platonists no doubt taught that the world has three ἀρχαί—Matter, Model, and God (*Haer.* 2.14.3),[36] but the second of these at any rate is unneces-

[36] Irenaeus accuses his opponents of following "Plato" in this matter. This characterization of Plato's teaching in the *Timaeus* is in fact derived not from the master himself but from his Middle Platonist interpreters. See Alcinous, *Didask.* 9.

sary. "This artisan God who made the world is the only God … and he himself took the 'Model' and form of the things that were made *from himself*" (*Haer.* 2.16.1). God himself is the sufficient explanation of why things are the way they are. Curiously enough, the effect of this is to reinforce a position that Middle Platonists had espoused since the first century BCE—that the true locus of the Forms or Ideas is the mind of God, a view that is, moreover, reiterated by Philo in his interpretation of the Genesis creation story.

This same principle explains Irenaeus' attitude towards the first of the Platonist *archai*, matter.[37] He straightforwardly accuses his opponents of denying "that God … created matter itself" (*Haer.* 2.10.3), and of thinking "that they can give an explanation of the origin of the substance of matter" (*Haer.* 2.10.2). The second of these accusations is no doubt correct. Indeed from our point of view, Irenaeus seems to give such an account himself—though he would not acknowledge the fact, since in attributing the creation of matter to God, he no doubt means to deny that *any* human being can grasp *how* it came to be (*Haer.* 2.28.7). The first accusation, however, is correct only if, with Irenaeus, one insists arbitrarily that "God" can only mean the Demiurge. Valentinians did not, as far as one can tell, take the Platonist line that matter is co-eternal with God—not, at least, with the ultimate Depth, which is the source of all things. Their view was that matter was an undesirable by-product of the procession of being.

Irenaeus, however, did not directly attack that proposition, though he might as well have. His perception that "God" refers to the Demiurge, and his firm belief that his opponents were drawing on Platonist principles in their portrayal of "creation," conspired jointly to direct his criticism upon a position they did not in fact maintain. His own conviction was based on a principle that he no doubt accepted as traditional: that God created everything, including matter, "out of non-existence" (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), an idea he found both in Theophilus of Antioch[38] and in Hermas' *Shepherd*. What he understands by it, he explains in *Adversus*

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[37] It should be noted here that the idea of "stuff" (ὕλη) that underlies change (τό ὑποκείμενον) was introduced into the philosophical tradition by Aristotle not Plato, who in the *Timaeus* speaks only of a "receptacle" which is the proper medium of things that "become," and which he appears to identify with space. In the discourse of the Valentinians and Irenaeus, "matter" appears to mean the stuff of which visible bodies are made.

[38] Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 2.10: The prophets "συμφώνως ἐδίδαξαν ἡμᾶς, ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν. οὐ γάρ τι τῷ θεῷ συνήκμασεν."

haereses 2.10.4: God himself "invented" or "made up" the "stuff" of the visible kosmos "even though it did not exist beforehand."[39] Thus, the principle of creation *ex nihilo* is merely a reiteration of Irenaeus' fundamental conviction that God is responsible for the being and existence of *everything* that is not God.[40] The truth, Irenaeus tells us, is that God, "freely and on his own initiative made, ordered, and perfected everything and his will is the subsistence[41] of all things" (*Haer.* 2.30.9). God, then, does not draw on anything external to himself for the work of creation—not a set of archetypes, and certainly not a pre-existent cosmic "stuff."

This same principle—of God's exclusive responsibility and unlimited power in creation—governs yet another element in his polemic. In *Adversus haereses* 2.2, Irenaeus takes explicit notice of the tendency of his opponents to attribute the creation of the visible world to an agent or agents other than God.[42] He observes that there are two versions of this teaching: one according to which such agents create "without the consent [*praeter sententiam*] of him who is the transcendent Father" (*Haer.* 2.2.1); and another according to which such agents act "at [God's] behest and with [God's] knowledge" (*Haer.* 2.2.3). The first of these alternatives he dismisses summarily. It leads inevitably to the conclusion that the supreme God is inferior to these angelic agents, or—what comes to the same thing—that God is enclosed or contained by what is "outside" him. Such a deity, as he has already shown, does not deserve the title "God."

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[39] For the phrase, ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, *Haer.* 2.10.3; cf. 2.28.7.

[40] This statement is true for Irenaeus; but Justin Martyr held to the view that there was a substratum "out of which" God made what was made—the very view that Irenaeus attributes to his gnostics. Philo too speaks of creation *ex nihilo*, but to him this does not preclude the notion of a pre-existent matter: see, for example, *Leg.* 3.3.10 and *Spec.* 1.327–329. The case is different with Theophilus of Antioch, who seems to take the same line as Irenaeus, and from whom the latter may have derived his account: see *Autol.* 1.4, 2.4, 2.10.

[41] Irenaeus' Latin translator has *substantia* here, which Rousseau (SC 294:319) renders as "matière," no doubt taking the Greek to have been οὐσία. It seems more likely, however, that *substantia* here renders the Greek ὑπόστασις, that which "gives substance" to something.

[42] Irenaeus has more in mind here than the Valentinian or Ptolemaean Demiurge, or the creator-figures of his "multitude of Gnostics" (*Haer.* 1.29.4; 1.30.3ff.). He had called attention to this teaching in his earlier summary accounts of heretical "systems": *Haer.* 1.23.2 (Simonians); 1.23.5 (Menander); 1.24.1 (Saturninus); 1.24.4 (Basilides); 1.25.1 (Carpocrates).

Refutation of the second alternative costs Irenaeus more effort—and understandably, since one version of it was firmly ensconced in the tradition he was defending. If Paul had spoken of "one God the Father from whom are all things," he had also spoken of "one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things" (1 Cor 8:6) and John's Gospel had employed the same sort of language when speaking of the Logos (John 1:3). The notion, then, that God made use of an intermediary or intermediaries in the act of creation was not confined to Irenaeus' "heretics." Theophilus of Antioch, for example, who was a favorite of Irenaeus', asserted that God had the Logos as his "assistant" or "under-worker" (ὑπουργός) in creation;[43] and Philo had referred to the divine Logos as God's "instrument" (τό δι' οὗ) in creation, God himself being "cause" (αἴτιον).[44] In his rebuttal of a gnostic cosmogony, however, Irenaeus thinks he can afford to ignore such language; for what he is attacking is the particular thesis that the world was formed by "angels or the Fashioner of the kosmos," that is, the Demiurge (*Haer.* 2.2.3)—a thesis that both he and his adversaries carefully distinguished from the teaching that the Logos (or Savior) is directly (or indirectly) involved in the creation of the kosmos. Irenaeus' argument in this connection boils down to a single point.

> Even though they assert (as Basilides says) that the angels or the Fashioner of the kosmos were made by the original Father at the end of a long downward chain [of intermediaries], nevertheless it is the agent from whom the chain originates who will be the cause of the things that have been created (*Haer.* 2.2.3).

The multiplication of intermediaries does not of itself either decrease or qualify God's responsibility for the creation, since tools or instruments are presumably under the control of the will of the agent who employs them.

But there is, from Irenaeus' point of view, a weakness in this argument. The agent who employs tools or instruments may indeed be fully responsible for what they produce; but the character of the product is nonetheless partially determined by what the tool in question is capable of accomplishing. Yet Irenaeus is committed to the view that God's creative will is not limited by any external factor. Hence, he carries his argument another step. As in the case of his attack on their alleged doctrine of a pre-existent matter, here too he accuses his opponents,

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[43] Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 2.10.

[44] See Philo, *Cher.* 125.

somewhat unjustly,[45] of likening God to human beings with all their limitations and dependencies. But if the Creator cannot be thought to need a "stuff" out of which to shape the kosmos, neither can he, says Irenaeus, be thought to "need a multitude of instruments" (*Haer.* 2.2.4).

> He himself, predetermining all things within himself in a way that is inexplicable and inconceivable to us, made them just as he pleased [*quemadmodum voluit*], giving to all the beings their form, their order, and the commencement of their creation … For it is proper to God's transcendent being not to stand in need of other instruments for the establishing of the things that are made … (*Haer.* 2.2.4–5)

In sum, then, Irenaeus insists that as the all-containing Fullness of things, God is the sole and unmediated source of the existence and being of everything that is not God. Creation, as Irenaeus envisages it, is simply God's deliberate assertion or positing of a kosmos composed of finite (that is, generate) beings that remain dependent on their Creator at once for their existence and for their being what they are. "At the very moment in which God conceived [the kosmos] in his mind, what he had conceived in his mind came to be" (*Haer.* 2.3.2).

Once all this is said, however, the problem of the place or role of the Logos/Son in the work of creation returns to haunt Irenaeus. He has failed—perhaps willfully—to note that in the grand myth of his opponents the Pleroma, the first phase in the emanation of being, with which the divine silence is broken, is not simply or primarily another "world." It is the complete self-articulation of God's Mind. This goal is achieved by the generation of successive "eternities" or "realms" (Æons), each of which brings the whole into focus in a particularized way. The total system or succession, however, seems to have been conceived (though the conception is not perhaps consistently executed) on the model of an extended logical division, with the result that the later Æons bring the Whole into focus in modes of decreasing universality. It is only the first of the Æons, therefore, that fully "comprehends" the eternal Depth and can fully express it; and this no doubt explains why its titles are "Onlybegotten Intellect" on the one hand and "Truth" on the other. The later Æons are therefore subordinate to it in the sense that they represent the ultimate Deity only by articulating what Onlybegotten is. They represent aspects or logical "parts" of the Truth that Intellect

[45] Unjustly, that is, if "God" is taken to mean the ultimate Source rather than the Demiurge.

embodies; and one can understand, therefore, why their knowledge of the Ultimate is said to be mediated through Onlybegotten.

Envisaged in this fashion, however, the Ptolemaean Fullness has a double identity. From one point of view, it simply *is* the divine Son or Word of the Johannine prologue—that is, God's self-reproduction, which is variously articulated and presented as Word, Life, Humanity, etc.—and finally, when the process of production and reintegration is complete, summed up in the marriage of Wisdom and Savior. From another point of view, however, it represents *at the same time* the original, archetypical kosmos, the model of the visible world. In portraying the Pleroma in this fashion, moreover, the Ptolemaeans seem to have been in full accord with Philo of Alexandria, who had characterized the intelligible kosmos, the archetypical world, as "the elder son of God" and identified it variously as Wisdom and as Logos.[46] Philo, to be sure, did not populate his intelligible kosmos with mythic agents nor lend it a kind of internal history in which such agents act and interact: he did not, that is to say, read the human struggle with evil back in to the life of God's Word and Wisdom. Nevertheless the Ptolemaeans, when they pictured the divine Son, God's Logos and Wisdom, as the embodiment of God's "mind" and thus as the intelligible and immaterial version of the kosmos, were by no means acting without precedent.

Irenaeus, however, approached the Ptolemaean Fullness with his own agenda in mind. He insisted, as we have seen, that the only "Fullness" of being is the Creator God, who encloses all things but is not enclosed. Consistently with this principle, he instinctively—and understandably—envisaged the gnostic pleroma simply as an alternative kosmos. What captured his attention was its character as a world populated with a plurality of divine beings; and in it, accordingly, he detected not the one Son of God in varying presentations or aspects, but many Christs. Even though his opponents

> with their lips … confess "one Lord Jesus Christ," the Son of God, in their teaching they assign a special emanation to Onlybegotten, another to Logos, another to Christ, and another to the Savior, with the result that all of these are said, as they would have it, to be but one, yet each of them is separately grasped and has its own special emanation (*Haer.* 4·33·3).

He does not see how the Fullness can contain so many Christs and still be the one divine Son, summed up initially in the person of

[46] E.g. Philo, *Deus* 31; *Agr.* 51; and cf. *Ebr.* 30.

Onlybegotten (with his consort Truth), and finally in that of the Savior (with his consort Wise doudom).

Furthermore, as if this were not enough, the internal history of this archetypal kosmos focuses on the occurrence of a "fault," its consequences, and its remedy. The divine kosmos, then, is archetypal in an unusual and even shocking sense. It models, as one would expect, the form or structure of the visible kosmos that emerges in the second phase of the myth. But it also models the ignorance and "passion" from which the latter will have to be redeemed. Indeed it is the source of that passion, which, in its final form as matter, is disposed of only when the visible kosmos is consumed in the fire of its own ignorance. Thus it appears that, were it not for this "fault" in the Overworld, our visible kosmos (and its Creator) would never have come into being: the whole second "phase" of the Ptolemaean cosmogony looks, from one point of view, like an inadvertence or an unfortunate slip.

Irenaeus, then, ignores the Valentinian Pleroma in its character as the unique divine Offspring that is at the same time the visible world's paradigm. As he sees it, there is and can be nothing that stands between God and the created kosmos. Hence God in creating did not look to any model other than what he predetermined "within himself." He employed no "stuff" other than what his own will called into being. And finally, he made use of no external "instruments." God made the world with his own "hands."

> . . . it is he who by himself has established and made and ordered[47] all things, and included in that "all" are we and this world of ours . . . It was not angels, then, who made and shaped us—for angels could never make an image of God—nor any other agent except the true God, nor any Power far removed from the Father of everything. Nor for that matter did God have any need of such beings in order to make the things he had foreordained within himself to come into being—as if he did not have his very own hands! For there are always present with him his Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, through which and in which he made all things freely and on his own initiative (*Haer.* 4.20.1).

Plainly, Irenaeus wants to stress God's freedom from any constraint or necessity. Equally plainly, he wants to stress not merely God's (ultimate) responsibility for the created order, but also God's direct—that is, unmediated—relationship to created beings. Hence, the metaphor

[47] The Latin version here inserts the words "and contains" (*et continet*). The Armenian version omits them.

of the divine "hands" is here set over against the image of "instruments": what God's hands do, God does, without extraneous instruments. Irenaeus, then, would have been worried by Theophilus' portrayal of God's Logos as an "assistant" or "under-worker," even though he takes from Theophilus the distinction between Logos and Wisdom and then, more or less on his own hook, identifies these two as Son and Spirit respectively. For Irenaeus, it seems, Logos and Spirit are not to be too casually distinguished from God. Otherwise his emphasis on the intimacy of the transcendent God's relation to the created order could not be sustained.

Irenaeus, then, had created a problem for himself. His refusal to allow "coming to be" (γένεσις) to be understood as being born or as emanation, when taken together with his firm belief that God is the unique Source of all things, made it very difficult for him either (a) to give an account of the γένεσις of the divine Son, that is, of the Logos or Christ—or, for that matter, of the divine Spirit; or (b) to make sense of texts like 1 Corinthians 8:6 and John 1:3, which presuppose the involvement of the Son in creation. His image of the "hands" of God evinces his intent to be faithful to the latter teaching (cf. *Haer.* 5.18.2 and 4.20.2, for example), and indeed his designation of the Word or Son as the παράδειγμα (*exemplum*, cf. *Haer.* 4.20.1) that God "takes … from himself" suggests that he was not unfamiliar with the Philonic picture of the Logos as the world's archetype in the act of realizing itself externally. His way of reconciling his distaste for an archetype or a mediator that is "alien" to God with the language of the tradition is, in effect, to question whether the image of "birth" as applied to the Son of God can imply any separation of parent and offspring. In other words, he accepts, in gingerly fashion, the appropriateness of the image of birth, but refuses the conclusion that would seem to be entailed by that image. No doubt this explains his insistence that the "generation" of the Son is beyond human understanding (*Inenarrabilis … generatio eius*, *Haer.* 2.28.6), meaning, no doubt, as he had said earlier on, that one must not, like his opponents, "transfer to God's eternal Word the generation proper to the word that human beings produce" (*Haer.* 2.13.8). The effect of this prohibition is to insist that generation of the Logos is not a *part* of the story of the world's genesis, but, in the strictest sense, its *presupposition*; and this in turn means, as far as Irenaeus is concerned, that it is not a possible topic for theological inquiry or speculation.

In the end, then, Irenaeus' conflict with his gnostics over the Creator God indicates that he and they alike were the heirs of the Hellenized

Jewish school of thought—of which Philo is the most prominent representative known to us—that read Plato's *Timaeus* as an account of the world's creation parallel, and roughly equivalent, to that given in the myth of Genesis 1, and in the process adapted Middle Platonic—and ultimately Neo-Pythagorean—apophatism to its own tradition. For the most part, of course, Middle Platonists, like the Greek philosophical tradition generally, had no notion of an act of divine creation that had brought the kosmos into being. If they spoke of God, the Forms, and Matter as "first principles," what that meant was that these were the ultimate factors that determined the shape of the eternal world-system. Whether Irenaeus was aware of this circumstance or not is uncertain—though surely the probability is that he was not. His polemic against Valentianian gnosticism reads, in the end, like a further—Christian and critical—adaptation of this Jewish and Platonist outlook by one who had discerned, in the light of a Christian and gnostic handling of the same outlook, that monotheism required that everything in and about the kosmos must have God as its originator: that, indeed, the reality that is "given" prior to all explanation is not the kosmos itself but God. In the process of developing the implications of this principle, he took it that his opponents were Platonists in the sense that they held the Forms and Matter to be principles independent of God, which seems not to have been the case, and undertook to tutor them on the subject of the true origin of these same "principles." On the other hand, he assented to their apophatism, but concluded, perhaps rightly in this instance, that they thoroughly misunderstood the sense in which it is right to say that God is "incomprehensible," and what was entailed by their description of the ultimate God as "unenclosed." Like many arguments, then, this was a thoroughly confused affair, partly because of Irenaeus' refusal to acknowledge that the true Valentianian counterpart of his Creator God was not the Demiurge but the ultimate Depth who, with his Silence, was taken to be the Source of all reality. It can nevertheless be argued that, in spite of this *ignoratio elenchi*, Irenaeus developed the philosophical tradition he shared with his adversaries in a sounder and more useful direction than they.

GOD BEYOND KNOWING: CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND DISCOURSE ON GOD

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In his great study on Methodius of Olympus, Lloyd Patterson often emphasized the influence of theologians such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria on later generations of Christian Greek authors. In his opinion, scholars had neglected to explore these influences adequately, and it was Clement who supplied Methodius with basic elements for the interpretation of Christian life—ascetic life in particular. Acknowledging that assessment and achievement, this contribution will explore some of Clement's thoughts, not so much about human or ascetic life, but about God in relationship to human life. It is not intended to be a survey of everything Clement has written about the concept of God, but it will touch on a few basic themes, trying to put them in the context of Clement's theology. It also aims to sketch out an emerging necessity for someone like Clement to compete with other traditions and to use common philosophical language, albeit for his own religious goals.

The passages in which Clement speaks about God show a wide variety of subjects: the discussion may be about creation or creational power and might. It may refer to the positive and negative elements in the perception of God in language reflecting philosophical modes of speech. Clement frequently describes God as the One, and these discussions about the unity or uniqueness of God have a complex background. They may draw either directly or indirectly on a Platonic passage or a biblical text; they may also be inspired by a polemical discussion in which the author targets Marcionite or gnosticizing constituencies. The same holds true for his remarks on God's wisdom and goodness; they can occur in their own right, often tied to a biblical passage, but they also appear in an adversarial context, in which the reader

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easily detects Clement's polemical agenda. Another intrinsic part of Clement's discourse about God has to do with the relationship to the Logos, the divine intellectual power, often identified by Clement as the Son or Christ. Related is the discussion about human assimilation to God and the search for knowledge of God. Finally there is the intriguing aspect of the male and *female* elements in Clement's perception of God.

To illustrate the theme, this essay will translate a few passages from the works of Clement as starting points for discussion. Lloyd Patterson once said that translating a difficult ancient text (and which Greek text does not qualify as such?) was in his view one of the most demanding tasks of the trade. He did not consider it a technical skill or a mere practicality that one had to overcome quickly to arrive at higher theological ground. He thought that the core of all patristic work was to carefully balance words, detect subtle inflections, and give satisfactory interpretations, all through translation of texts.

Naming God

In a passage of the fifth book of the *Stromateis*, a book that contains most of the relevant material for the subject, Clement sums up the difficulties in speaking about God. The passage was characterized by Eric Osborn as Clement's "most comprehensive philosophical statement about God."[1]

> "Indeed, in the discussion about God this is the most difficult question to tackle: for since it is hard to find out the principle of everything, it is even harder to prove the first and oldest principle, which is also the cause for all others to come into being and to exist thereafter. How can words express that which is neither a general kind nor a difference nor a distinct species nor an individual nor a number; it is not even something that occurs accidentally, nor is it subject to accident. One can not rightly call him "Whole," for the whole belongs to the order of (quantifiable) magnitude, and God is the father of the whole universe. One should not speak about God's parts either; for the One is indivisible and therefore also infinite; not understood in terms of space or time but as a continuum and without limit and, therefore, formless and nameless. If we should give it a name, improperly calling it either

[1] Eric Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 27.

> "One" or the "Good," either "Mind" or the "Selfsame," either "Father" or "God," or either "Creator" or "Lord," we speak without applying its name; but, being at a loss, we use beautiful names in order that our understanding may find support in them, while not going astray in other directions. For each individual name is not informative of God, but all names together are indicative of the power of the Almighty. For words can be pronounced either according to their own properties or according to their mutual relationship, but one cannot assume any of them with regard to God. Neither can God be grasped by scientific demonstration, for this consists of arguments that are prior and more known, but nothing is prior to the Unbegotten."[2]

In his attempt to describe the transcendence of God, Clement uses philosophical language, calling God the "first principle" and the "first cause."[3] A few chapters earlier, in *Strom.* 5.78.1, Clement had quoted Plato's *Timaeus* explicitly, saying that "it is an impossible task to find the Father and Maker of the universe…"[4] In a later passage, in *Strom.* 7.2.2–3, speaking about the transcendence of God, Clement draws on Plato, calling God the "cause beyond" (ἐπέκεινα αἴτιον) with a nod to an influential chapter from Plato's *Republic*.[5] In a passage of the *Paedagogue* in which he broaches the subject of the transcendence and

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[2] *Strom.* 5.81.4–82.3. 81.4: ναὶ μὴν ὁ δυσμεταχειριστότατος περὶ θεοῦ λόγος οὗτός ἐστιν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀρχὴ παντὸς πράγματος δυσεύρετος, πάντως που ἡ πρώτη καὶ πρεσβυτάτη ἀρχὴ δύσδεικτος, ἥτις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν αἰτία τοῦ γενέσθαι καὶ γενομένους εἶναι. 5. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ῥητὸν ὃ μήτε γένος ἐστὶ μήτε διαφορὰ μήτε εἶδος μήτε ἄτομον μήτε ἀριθμός, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ συμβεβηκός τι μηδὲ ᾧ συμβέβηκέν τι. οὐκ ἄν δὲ ὅλον εἴποι τις αὐτὸν ὀρθῶς· ἐπὶ μεγέθει γὰρ τάττεται τὸ ὅλον καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὅλων πατήρ. 6. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον· ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ τὸ ἕν, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον, οὐ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιεξίτητον νοούμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον καὶ μὴ ἔχον πέρας, καὶ τοίνυν ἀσχημάτιστον καὶ ἀνωνόμαστον. 82.1. κἂν ὀνομάζωμεν αὐτό ποτε, οὐ κυρίως καλοῦντες ἤτοι ἓν ἢ τἀγαθὸν ἢ νοῦν ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ὂν ἢ πατέρα ἢ θεὸν ἢ δημιουργὸν ἢ κύριον, οὐχ ὡς ὄνομα αὐτοῦ προφερόμενοι λέγομεν, ὑπὸ δὲ ἀπορίας ὀνόμασι καλοῖς προσχρώμεθα, ἵν' ἔχῃ ἡ διάνοια, μὴ περὶ ἄλλα πλανωμένη, ἐπερείδεσθαι τούτοις. 2. οὐ γὰρ τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον μηνυτικὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ ἀθρόως ἅπαντα ἐνδεικτικὰ τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δυνάμεως· τὰ γὰρ λεγόμενα ἢ ἐκ τῶν προσόντων αὐτοῖς ῥητά ἐστιν ἢ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως, οὐδὲν δὲ τούτων λαβεῖν οἷόν τε περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. 3. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμῃ λαμβάνεται τῇ ἀποδεικτικῇ· αὕτη γὰρ ἐκ προτέρων καὶ γνωριμωτέρων συνίσταται, τοῦ δὲ ἀγεννήτου οὐδὲν προϋπάρχει.

[3] Plato and Aristotle, *passim.*

[4] *Strom.* 5.78.1. Τὸν γὰρ πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὑρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὑρόντα εἰς πάντας ἐξειπεῖν ἀδύνατον. Clement quotes from *Plato, Tim.* 28c. Cf. Clement, *Protr.* 68.1.

[5] *Strom.* 7.2.3. παρ' οὗ ἐκμανθάνειν ⟨ἔστιν⟩ τὸ ἐπέκεινα αἴτιον, … Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 6.509b. For further bibliography, see Alain Le Boulluec, *Stromates* VII, SC 428:43, n. 6.

the oneness of God, Clement similarly writes that "God is one and beyond the one and above the monad itself."[6] These passages not only show that Clement was indebted to Greek philosophy but also that he flourished in an environment in which philosophy must have been appreciated.

Clement not only showed the ability to use the philosophical language of his time, but he also was able to link this philosophical vocabulary to the bible. In the above-mentioned passage, *Strom*.5.78.1, Clement connects Plato's statement about the impossibility of finding the Father and the Creator of the universe to a story from Exodus, in which Moses climbs up the mountain.[7] The ascent of Moses functions as a biblical parallel to the Platonic citations. Clement goes beyond making parallels when he writes "for he (Plato) had heard most certainly that the all-wise Moses who went up the mountain—up to the summit of intellectual realities through holy contemplation—ordered that none of the people go with him."[8] In this view Plato merely repeated—not to say stole—Moses' message modifying it with his own words—an apologetic theme well-known throughout Clement's work.[9] Clement then concludes the passage where he started, using the LXX as evidence that God is invisible and beyond words; Moses went "into the darkness where God was," because mortal failings cannot perceive the truth.[10]

This kind of complex fusion of philosophical language and biblical narrative was not entirely Clement's invention; he found a model for this technique in Philo of Alexandria. In this, as in other pas-

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[6] *Paed*. 1.71.1. ἓν δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν μονάδα. Cf. Philo, *Praem*. 40, *Leg* 2.3.

[7] See Exod 19–20.

[8] Strom. 5.78.2. ἀκήκοεν γὰρ εὖ μάλα ὡς ὁ πάνσοφος Μωυσῆς εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἀνιὼν (διὰ τὴν ἁγίαν θεωρίαν ἐπὶ τὴν κορυφὴν τῶν νοητῶν) ἀναγκαίως διαστέλλεται μὴ τὸν πάντα λαὸν συναναβαίνειν ἑαυτῷ·

[9] See Daniel Ridings, *The Attic Moses. The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers* (Coll. Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgiensia LIX; Göteborg: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

[10] *Strom*. 5.78.3. καὶ ὅταν λέγῃ ἡ γραφὴ "εἰσῆλθεν δὲ Μωυσῆς εἰς τὸν γνόφον οὗ ἦν ὁ θεός," τοῦτο δηλοῖ τοῖς συνιέναι δυναμένοις, ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἀόρατός ἐστι καὶ ἄρρητος, γνόφος δὲ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡ τῶν πολλῶν ἀπιστία τε καὶ ἄγνοια τῇ αὐγῇ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐπίπροσθε φέρεται "And when scripture says 'Moses went up into the darkness where God was,' this might show for those who are able to understand that God is invisible and beyond words; the darkness which in reality is the unbelief and ignorance of the masses screens off the bright light of the truth."

sages, Clement is clearly dependent on Philo for both his choice of biblical text and for his interpretation. On various occasions Philo had linked the story of Moses' ascent to contemplation and initiation; Clement's handling of the "thick darkness" (γνόφος) is highly Philonic. Philo had equated the biblical "darkness" with the invisible God.[11] While Clement did not need Philo's help to quote Plato—this knowledge came with his own cultural baggage—he *did* need Philo to find the right biblical passage to illustrate the traditional philosophical concept.

In his search for the proper name of God, Clement next turns to an Aristotelian argument, in which things are named according to definition, property, genus, difference, or accident.[12] Clement adapts the argument to show that, since God does not fall into any of these kind of predicates, words fall short and God cannot be named.[13] The same holds true for other qualities or quantities, whether they refer to wholeness or parts. Clement maintains that God is a simple, undivided unity, a monad; he is infinite because he is not to be understood in terms of space or time, and also formless and nameless. To view the complex nature of Clement's discussion, we turn again to his philosophical model. In Plato's *Parmenides*, an important work in the background of ancient discussions about unity and plurality, the argument is made that if the one exists, the one cannot be many; neither can there be parts nor a whole. If it has no parts, it can have no beginning or end and therefore is unlimited; it is also without form.[14] Consequently that

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[11] Philo, *Post.* 14; *Gig.* 54; *Mut.* 7; *Mos.* 1.158. See also Clement, *Strom.* 2.6.1 and 5.71.5; Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and his Use of Philo* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 148–152, 194–195.

[12] Aristotle, *Top.* 121b–123a (Bekker).

[13] See also Osborn, *Philosophy of Clement*, 28–29.

[14] Plato, *Parm.* 137c. Εἶεν δή, φάναι· εἰ ἕν ἐστιν, ἆλλο τι οὐκ ἂν εἴη πολλὰ τὸ ἕν; Πῶς γὰρ ἄν; Οὔτε ἄρα μέρος αὐτοῦ οὔτε ὅλον αὐτὸ δεῖ εἶναι. Τί δή; Τὸ μέρος που ὅλου μέρος ἐστίν. Ναί. Τί δὲ τὸ ὅλον; οὐχὶ οὗ ἂν μέρος μηδὲν ἀπῇ ὅλον ἂν εἴη; Πάνυ γε. Ἀμφοτέρως ἄρα τὸ ἓν ἐκ μερῶν ἂν εἴη, ὅλον τε ὂν καὶ μέρη ἔχον. 137d. Ἀνάγκη. Ἀμφοτέρως ἂν ἄρα οὕτως τὸ ἓν πολλὰ εἴη ἀλλ' οὐχ ἕν. Ἀληθῆ. Δεῖ δέ γε μὴ πολλὰ ἀλλ' ἓν αὐτὸ εἶναι. Δεῖ. Οὔτ' ἄρα ὅλον ἔσται οὔτε μέρη ἕξει, εἰ ἓν ἔσται τὸ ἕν. Οὐ γάρ. Οὐκοῦν εἰ μηδὲν ἔχει μέρος, οὔτ' ἂν ἀρχὴν οὔτε τελευτὴν οὔτε μέσον ἔχοι· μέρη γὰρ ἂν ἤδη αὐτοῦ τὰ τοιαῦτα εἴη. Ὀρθῶς. Καὶ μὴν τελευτή γε καὶ ἀρχὴ πέρας ἑκάστου. Πῶς δ' οὔ; Ἄπειρον ἄρα τὸ ἕν, εἰ μήτε ἀρχὴν μήτε τελευτὴν ἔχει. Ἄπειρον. Καὶ ἄνευ σχήματος ἄρα· οὔτε γὰρ στρογγύλου οὔτε εὐθέος μετέχει. "Well then," he said, "if the one exists, the one cannot be many, can it?" "No, of course not." "Then there can be no part of it, nor can it be a whole." "How is that?" "The part surely is part of a whole." "Yes." "And what is the whole? Is not a whole that of which no part is wanting?" "Certainly." "Then in both cases the one

which does not exist has nothing pertaining or belonging to it and therefore does not have a name, nor is there any description or perception or opinion of it.[15] It appears that Clement's adaptation of his Platonic model fits well into a wider tradition of philosophical speculation about ways of describing God and naming the divine.[16]

It seems worthwhile to investigate further how Clement fits his philosophical approach into a biblical framework. In *Strom*.5.71.5, a passage that will be investigated more extensively later, Clement once more expresses the thought that "the first cause is not in a place but beyond place, time, name, and understanding." He continues by quoting Exod 33:13, in which Moses says "show yourself to me." Clement interprets this text as "referring to the fact that God cannot be taught by people nor be expressed in speech but can only be known by his power." He then adds "for the object of the search is without form and invisible, but the graceful gift of knowledge comes from God through the Son."[17] Again it was Philo who inspired Clement in his use of Exod 33:13, as

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would consist of parts, being a whole and having parts." "Inevitably." "Then in both cases the one would be many, not one." "True." "Yet it must be not many, but one." "Yes." "Then the one, if it is to be one, will not be a whole and will not have parts." "No." "And if it has no parts, it can have no beginning, or middle, or end, for those would be parts of it?" "Quite right." "And if it has no parts, it can have no beginning, or end, or middle, for those would be parts of it?" "Quite right." "End and beginning are, however, the limits of everything." "Of course." "Then the one, if it has neither beginning nor end, is unlimited." "Yes, it is unlimited." "And it is without form, for it partakes neither of the round nor of the straight." (trans. Harold N. Fowler, slightly adapted).

[15] Plato, *Parm*. 142a Ὃ δὲ μὴ ἔστι, τούτῳ τῷ μὴ ὄντι εἴη ἄν τι αὐτῷ ἢ αὐτοῦ; Καὶ πῶς; Οὐδ' ἄρα ὄνομα ἔστιν αὐτῷ οὐδὲ λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη οὐδὲ αἴσθησις οὐδὲ δόξα. Οὐ φαίνεται. Οὐδ' ὀνομάζεται ἄρα οὐδὲ λέγεται οὐδὲ δοξάζεται οὐδὲ γιγνώσκεται, οὐδέ τι τῶν ὄντων αὐτοῦ αἰσθάνεται. Οὐκ ἔοικεν. Ἦ δυνατὸν οὖν περὶ τὸ ἓν ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν; Οὔκουν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ. "But can that which does not exist have anything pertaining or belonging to it?" "Of course not." "Then the one has no name, nor is there any description or knowledge or perception or opinion of it." "Evidently not." "And it is neither named nor described nor thought of nor known, nor does any existing thing perceive it." "Apparently not." "Is it possible that all this is true about the one?" "I do not think so." (transl. Harold N. Fowler).

[16] For example, Alcinous, *Didask*. 10.4: οὔτε μέρος τινός, οὔτε ὡς ὅλον ἔχον τινὰ μέρη. See also Alain Le Boulluec, *Stromates* V, SC 279:264.

[17] *Strom*. 5.71.5. οὔκουν ἐν τόπῳ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ἀλλ' ὑπεράνω καὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου καὶ ὀνόματος καὶ νοήσεως. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Μωυσῆς φησιν "ἐμφάνισόν μοι σαυτόν", ἐναργέστατα αἰνισσόμενος μὴ εἶναι διδακτὸν πρὸς ἀνθρώπων μηδὲ ῥητὸν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνῃ τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ δυνάμει γνωστόν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ζήτησις ἀειδὴς καὶ ἀόρατος, ἡ χάρις δὲ τῆς γνώσεως παρ' αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ.

can be demonstrated from an earlier passage in *Strom.* 2.5–6, in which Clement discussed the proximity and distance of God, quoting phrases of Philo literally.[18] Philo had illustrated his discourse with various biblical texts: Exod 20:21 "by this time then he will enter into the darkness where God was,"[19] Exod 33:13 "he says, show yourself to me,"[20] and Gen 22:4 "he sees the place from afar."[21] These texts play a key role in Philo's argument that God's nature is impossible to fathom; none of the created beings would be able to attain knowledge of God by their own efforts. In *Strom.* 5.71.5, Clement not only uses some of Philo's biblical examples and adapts his arguments but also reshapes his thought in a Christological way by changing Philo's plural powers of God to the singular power coming through the Son.[22]

In arguing that God is beyond space, time, name and understanding, Clement seems to set up a logical argument, defining the object of his investigation by its opposite. Some of these qualifications are firmly based in Plato's work, particularly in the *Parmenides*,[23] others were floating around in school traditions.[24] Clement applies epithets that are marked by privative alphas, expressing not what God is but what God is not. Thus the One is indivisible (ἀδιαίρετον), boundless and infinite (ἄπειρον, ἀδιεξίτητον), without interval (ἀδιάστατον), without limit (μὴ ἔχον πέρας), without form (ἀσχημάτιστον), or without name (ἀνωνόμαστον), and unbegotten (ἀγέννητος). In *Strom.* 5.65.2 Clement explicitly and approvingly quotes Plato to make the point that "the God of the universe is above all speech (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φωνὴν), all conception, all thought, can never be transmitted in writing, and is ineffable (ἄρρητος) even by his own power."[25] It should be noted that Clement has a vast depository of such negative or antithetical qualifica-

[18] Philo, *Post.* 5–18; see also Van den Hoek, *Clement*, 148–152.

[19] *Post.* 14. ἤδη γοῦν καὶ εἰς τὸν γνόφον ὅπου ἦν ὁ θεὸς εἰσελεύσεται.

[20] *Post.* 16. λέγει γάρ· ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτόν, . . .

[21] *Post.* 17. πάλιν· ὁ Ἀβραὰμ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν τόπον ὃν εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναβλέψας ὁρᾷ τὸν τόπον μακρόθεν·

[22] See David T. Runia, "Clement of Alexandria and the Philonic doctrine of the Divine Power(s)," *VC* 58 (2004): 256–276.

[23] See above Plato, *Parmenides* 137cd.

[24] For example, Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.3. Καὶ μὴν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς ἀίδιός ἐστιν, ἄρρητος, αὐτοτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀπροσδεής, ἀειτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀεὶ τέλειος, παντελὴς τουτέστι πάντη τέλειος· θειότης, οὐσιότης, ἀλήθεια, συμμετρία, ἀγαθόν. See also LeBoulluec, SC 279:232.

[25] *Strom.* 5.65.2. ὁ γὰρ τῶν ὅλων θεὸς ὁ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φωνὴν καὶ πᾶν νόημα καὶ πᾶσαν ἔννοιαν οὐκ ἄν ποτε γραφῇ παραδοθείη, ἄρρητος ὢν δυνάμει τῇ αὐτοῦ.

tions throughout his work,[26] but the idea that God is beyond name and understanding occurs most frequently.[27]

The reason why God has no name, is answered in a subsequent chapter; in *Strom.* 5.83.1, Clement states that "everything that comes with a name is begotten."[28] When Clement does offer a list of names for God, such as "One," "Good," "Mind," "Selfsame," "Father," "God," "Creator," "Lord," he is quick to explain that these names do not exist because God *has* a name but because of the lack of human understanding. The names are not used in a proper sense except to support the human mind which might get lost otherwise.

Clement does not mention here another aspect of the question of the names and naming of God, but this comes up elsewhere; it is the fact that biblical language often describes God in human terms. In *Strom.* 5.68.3, for example, Clement writes "therefore let no one suppose that hands, and feet, and mouth, and eyes, and going in and coming out, and acts of anger and threats, are said by the Hebrews to be passions of God. By no means! But that some of these expressions are used more sacredly in an allegorical sense, which, as the discourse proceeds, we shall explain at the proper time."[29] Philo had addressed the problem as well and stated that humans were incapable of forming a valid conception of God; humans only conceived divine things according to their own human nature.[30] Philo, however, seems to have accepted the anthropomorphic expressions in the Bible as a more or less inevitable practice; humans produce names because of their weaknesses. Clement is much more severe about this kind of language; he maintains that the images must be allegorized, since everything that comes with a name is begotten and God is not subject to passions or emotions.

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[26] For example: ἀγένητος, ἀγέννατος, ἄγνωστος, ἀειδής, ἀνενδεής, ἀθάνατός, ἄθυμός, ἄκμητος, ἀμετάβλητος, ἀμέτοχος, ἀμεμφής, ἄμεμπτος, ἀναμάρτητος, ἀνέφικτός, ἀνεπιθύμητος, ἀνεπίληπτος, ἀόρατος, ἀπαθής, ἀπέραντος, ἀπερίγραφος, ἀπερίληπτος, ἀπροσδεής, ἄρρητος, ἀσχημάτιστός, ἀσώματος, ἄχραντος, ἀχώρητος, ἀνεπιδεής, ἀνενδεής, ἀόρατος. See also the Index of O. Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus* (GCS 39; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1936).

[27] See Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: a study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 217–221.

[28] *Strom.* 5.83.1: Πᾶν τοίνυν, ὃ ὑπὸ ὄνομα πίπτει, γεννητόν ἐστιν ἐάν τε βούλωνται ἐάν τε μή. Clement adds "whether they want it or not."

[29] *Strom.* 5.68.3: διὸ καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ στόμα καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ εἰσόδους καὶ ἐξόδους καὶ ὀργὰς καὶ ἀπειλὰς μὴ πάθη θεοῦ τις ὑπολάβῃ παρὰ Ἑβραίοις λέγεσθαι, μηδαμῶς, ἀλληγορεῖσθαι δέ τινα ἐκ τούτων τῶν ὀνομάτων ὁσιώτερον, ἃ δὴ καὶ προϊόντος τοῦ λόγου κατὰ τὸν οἰκεῖον καιρὸν διασαφήσομεν.

[30] Philo, *Sacr.* 94–96.

Scholars have pointed out that there is a Platonic as well as a Christian apologetic tradition of speculating on the names of God—the latter perhaps mostly depending on the former.[31] Justin Martyr justified the giving of names, maintaining that almost any name could be given to God; he argued ingenuously that the fact that a name was given implied the pre-existence of the recipient of the name. Origen also had his own reasons for accepting the almost magical significance of divine names, which he saw as tools guiding the listener to an understanding of God, as far as this was possible.[32] When not engaged in a philosophical argument, Clement, for his part, regularly uses names for God, such as "Lord," "Father," "Creator." As can be seen from the index of Stählin, the designation "Almighty" or "Ruler of all" (παντωκράτωρ) is rather frequent.[33] This epithet which occurs in the LXX but hardly in the NT—except for the Apocalypse of John—was probably favored by early Christian writers because of its liturgical connotations.

Perceiving God

In spite of the inadequacy of human faculties in the face of the challenge of naming or knowing God, Clement does not despair of the possibility of perceiving God to some degree. In *Strom.* 5.71.2 Clement describes the spiritual process of the soul ascending toward the contemplation of God.

> "We might lay hold on the mode of purification by confession and the mode of contemplation by analysis, advancing to the first understanding. Through analysis of its underlying aspects we make a beginning, separating from the body its physical properties and taking away the dimension of depth, then that of breadth, and after these that of length. For the remaining point is unity which, so to speak, has position; if we take away its position, unity is perceptible. If now after removing all additional elements of bodies and of so-called bodiless things, we cast ourselves into

[31] Le Boulluec, *Stromates* V, SC 279:265.

[32] *Cels.* 6.65; see also Annewies van den Hoek, "Etymologizing in a Christian Context: the Techniques of Clement and Origen," *Studia Philonica Annual* 15 (2004): 122–168, esp. 128.

[33] See Index Stählin. The *TLG* shows the epithet sixty nine times in the works of Clement. It occurs only three times in Philo, once from a quotation of Isaiah (Isa 5:7; LXX has Sabaoth). In the NT the word only occurs once in Paul from a LXX quotation (2 Cor 6:18; LXX passim), but the word is frequently used in the Apocalypse.

> the greatness of Christ and from there advance through holiness to the vast immensity, we move in some way toward perception of the Almighty, gaining knowledge not of what he is but of what he is not. One should not think at all of form and movement, or position, or throne, or place, or right, or left of the Father of all, even though these words have been written; but the meaning of each of these will be explained in its proper place. No, the first cause is not in a place but beyond place, time, name, and understanding. For this reason also Moses says "show yourself to me," very clearly referring to the fact that God cannot be taught by humans nor be expressed in speech but can only be known by his power. For the object of the search is without form and invisible, but the graceful gift of knowledge comes from God through the Son."[34]

Clement had started the chapter with a distinction between the small and the great mysteries. In Middle Platonism this notion, which was used ironically in Plato's *Gorgias* 497c, became a kind of *topos*, indicating the difference between preparatory knowledge preceding philosophy and philosophy itself. Adapting the idea, Clement writes that "the small mysteries provide some basis for learning and function as preparatory training for things to come, while the great mysteries do not leave anything more to learn other than contemplating and meditating on the nature and the things."[35] In Clement's view the initial phase in this process consists of a form of purification that is accompanied by confession—a possible allusion to the rite of Baptism. Next is the stage of logical analysis and first understanding. By way of deduction,

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[34] *Strom.* 5.71.2 λάβοιμεν δ' ἂν τὸν μὲν καθαρτικὸν τρόπον ὁμολογίᾳ, τὸν δὲ ἐποπτικὸν ἀναλύσει ἐπὶ τὴν πρώτην νόησιν προχωροῦντες, δι' ἀναλύσεως ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιούμενοι, ἀφελόντες μὲν τοῦ σώματος τὰς φυσικὰς ποιότητας, περιελόντες δὲ τὴν εἰς τὸ βάθος διάστασιν, εἶτα τὴν εἰς τὸ πλάτος, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις τὴν εἰς τὸ μῆκος· τὸ γὰρ ὑπολειφθὲν σημεῖόν ἐστι μονὰς ὡς εἰπεῖν θέσιν ἔχουσα, ἧς ἐὰν περιέλωμεν τὴν θέσιν, νοεῖται μονάς. 3 εἰ τοίνυν, ἀφελόντες πάντα ὅσα πρόσεστι τοῖς σώμασιν καὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀσωμάτοις, ἐπιρρίψαιμεν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ Χριστοῦ κἀκεῖθεν εἰς τὸ ἀχανὲς ἁγιότητι προΐοιμεν, τῇ νοήσει τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἁμῇ γέ πῃ προσάγοιμεν ⟨ἄν⟩, οὐχ ὅ ἐστιν, ὃ δὲ μή ἐστι γνωρίσαντες· 4 σχῆμα δὲ καὶ κίνησιν ἢ στάσιν ἢ θρόνον ἢ τόπον ἢ δεξιὰ ἢ ἀριστερὰ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων πατρὸς οὐδ' ὅλως ἐννοητέον, καίτοι καὶ ταῦτα γέγραπται· ἀλλ' ὃ βούλεται δηλοῦν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον, κατὰ τὸν οἰκεῖον ἐπιδειχθήσεται τόπον. 5 οὔκουν ἐν τόπῳ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ἀλλ' ὑπεράνω καὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου καὶ ὀνόματος καὶ νοήσεως. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Μωυσῆς φησιν "ἐμφάνισόν μοι σαυτόν", ἐναργέστατα αἰνισσόμενος μὴ εἶναι διδακτὸν πρὸς ἀνθρώπων μηδὲ ῥητὸν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνῃ τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ δυνάμει γνωστόν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ζήτησις ἀειδὴς καὶ ἀόρατος, ἡ χάρις δὲ τῆς γνώσεως παρ' αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ.

[35] *Strom.* 5.71.1. μετὰ ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μικρὰ μυστήρια διδασκαλίας τινὰ ὑπόθεσιν ἔχοντα καὶ προπαρασκευῆς τῶν μελλόντων, τὰ δὲ μεγάλα περὶ τῶν συμπάντων, οὗ μανθάνειν ⟨οὐκ⟩ ἔτι ὑπολείπεται, ἐποπτεύειν δὲ καὶ περινοεῖν τήν τε φύσιν καὶ τὰ πράγματα.

which means separating the physical qualities or properties of things, the process leads to the perception of the unity of the object itself.

Speaking about logical analysis and abstraction, Clement seems to derive his thoughts from the area of geometry. In *Strom.* 6.90.4, another example of the same argument appears, this time with explicit reference to geometry.[36] Clement explains that "this field of learning (geometry) also makes the soul highly attentive in understanding and able to perceive what is true and to refute what is false; it makes the soul able to find agreements and proportions, so that it can hunt down similarity in things dissimilar; it leads us to the discovery of length without breadth, of a surface without depth, a point (σημεῖον) without parts, and it transposes us from the sensible to the intelligible realities."[37] It is not insignificant that both here and in the passage above (*Strom.* 5.71.2) the word σημεῖον is used, one of whose meanings is that of a "mathematical point."[38] Clement's discussion ultimately goes back to Plato's *Republic*, in which it is argued that the study of geometry has more to do with intellectual training than practical usefulness.[39] Plato jokes about the laughable language—as he sees it—used by those engaged in geometry: squaring, applying, adding and the like. The real objective in the study of geometry is, as Plato says, "the knowledge of the eternally existent." He adds that the study of geometry tends to draw the soul toward truth, directing reason upwards instead of downwards.[40] Other philosophers in the Platonic tradition and contemporaries of Clement shared this interest. Numenius, for example, could state that it was "best to be neglectful of things perceptible by the senses, to engage energetically

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[36] *Strom.* 6.90.4. ἐπεὶ καὶ ναυτιλία καὶ γεωργία τῆς ἀπὸ ταύτης χρείας πεπλήρωται, καθάπερ τῆς γεωμετρίας ἀρχιτεκτονική τε καὶ οἰκοδομική. "Since also navigation and agriculture derive the same benefit, just as architecture and building from geometry."

[37] *Strom.* 6.90.4. παρακολουθητικὴν δ' ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τοῦτο παρασκευάζει τὸ μάθημα τοῦ τε ἀληθοῦς διορατικὴν καὶ τοῦ ψεύδους διελεγκτικήν, ὁμολογιῶν τε καὶ ἀναλογιῶν εὑρετικήν, ὥστε ἐν τοῖς ἀνομοίοις τὸ ὅμοιον θηρᾶν, ἐνάγει τε ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὸ εὑρεῖν ἁπλατὲς μῆκος καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν ἀβαθῆ καὶ σημεῖον ἀμερὲς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ μετατίθησιν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν.

[38] See LSJ: Aristotle, *APo.* 76b5, *Ph.* 240b3; Euclid, *Def.*1, and others.

[39] Plato, *Rep.* 7.527b. τοῦ γὰρ ἀεὶ ὄντος ἡ γεωμετρικὴ γνῶσίς ἐστιν. Ὁλκὸν ἄρα, ὦ γενναῖε, ψυχῆς πρὸς ἀλήθειαν εἴη ἂν καὶ ἀπεργαστικὸν φιλοσόφου διανοίας πρὸς τὸ ἄνω σχεῖν ἃ νῦν κάτω οὐ δέον ἔχομεν.

[40] Tradition has it that the following phrase was inscribed on the door of Plato's Academy: ΑΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΗΤΟΣ ΜΗΔΕΙΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter." See also the website of Bernard Suzanne: http://platodialogues.org/faq/faq009.htm.

in mathematics, to look at the numbers, and thus learn carefully the scientific lesson what the existent is."[41]

Clement's application of the Platonic model shows an surprising twist when he introduces Christ in this process of intellectual abstraction. Christ becomes the mediator between the ascending soul and the ultimate perception of God. When the soul finally approaches God, the perception can only be expressed in a negative way: God cannot be known by what he is but by what he is not.

In fusing these traditions—Platonic and Christian—Clement shows his eclectic propensity and intellectual flexibility. He also describes the process in almost mystical terms, choosing the words μέγεθος for the "greatness" or "vastness" of Christ and ἀχανής for the "infinite void." In general the latter word occurs both in the context of heavenly and earthly chasms. It could be, as Alain Le Boulluec suggests, that ἀχανής corresponds to Plato's "great sea of beauty" to which the lover of wisdom turns to create beautiful ideas and theories;[42] ἀχανής could also be reminiscent of the abyss in the myth of creation, but even there it may be connected with vast bodies of water.[43]

All the mystical elements of purification, illumination and unification are present in this passage. It is clear that there is no unification without Christ, who for Clement is instrumental in the process of perceiving the unknowable God and who is the guarantee of the sanctity of the human being. To illustrate Christ's mediating role in biblical terms, Clement frequently quotes John 1:18 as in *Strom.* 5.81.3: "and John the apostle says nobody has ever seen God. The only-begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him. He called that which is invisible and unspeakable *bosom* of God. Some therefore have called him *depth* as he contains and embosoms all things while he is inaccessible and boundless."[44] Equally in *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37:

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[41] Numenius in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.22.2: καὶ ἔστι κράτιστον τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀμελήσαντι, νεανιευσαμένῳ πρὸς τὰ μαθήματα, τοὺς ἀριθμοὺς θεασαμένῳ, οὕτως ἐκμελετῆσαι μάθημα, τί ἐστι τὸ ὄν. See also Le Boulluec, *Stromates* V, SC 279:245.

[42] Plato, *Symp.* 210d: ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ θεωρῶν πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς λόγους καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τίκτῃ καὶ διανοήματα ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνῳ "may the one who turns toward the great sea of beauty and contemplates upon it, bring forth many beautiful and glorious words and thoughts in a bountiful love of wisdom."

[43] See Marguerite Harl, *La Bible d'Alexandrie LXX, La Genèse* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 87.

[44] *Strom.* 5.81.3. καὶ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀπόστολος· "θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς θεός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο", τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ἄρρητον κόλπον ὀνομάσας θεοῦ· βυθὸν ⟨δ'⟩ αὐτὸν κεκλήκασιν ἐντεῦθεν τινὲς ὡς ἂν περιειληφότα

"What else is necessary? Behold the mysteries of love and you will see the bosom of the Father, whom the only-begotten God alone revealed. God himself is love and for love's sake he became visible to us." The continuation of this passage, however, is remarkable in stating that "the unspeakable part of him is Father and the part that has sympathy with us is Mother. By loving, the Father became female, and a great proof of this is he, whom he bore from himself."[45]

The editor of the latter passage in the Loeb edition comments that "Gnostic speculation introduced a Mother as the cause of Creation (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.4), but the present passage would seem to have no connection at all with this. Clement is simply trying to account, in a mystical way, for the love of God as shown in the Incarnation."[46] It is hard to deny, however, the significance of the female imagery of God in this passage, since this is stated so overtly. Another explanation would be that Clement shares some features of Valentinian theology, with which he was familiar. In the excerpts made from the work of a Valentinian by the name Theodotus, Clement shows how various female elements were included in Theodotus' myth of creation, most notably in the representation of Sophia, the female aeon who was a mediator between God and the material world. The concurrence between Clement's passage in *Quis Dives Salvetur* and the Valentinians is not so much in connection with the mythological part of creation and the emanations—the editor of the Loeb edition is right in that respect—but more in terms of general metaphoric language. Clement does not seem opposed to exploit feminine imagery for the divine, and it even could be argued that he did so to attract some other constituencies.

Particularly in the *Paedogogue*, in which the divine Logos is connected with nourishment, the Father is called τροφεύς,[47] the one who procures

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καὶ ἐγκολπισάμενον τὰ πάντα ἀνέφικτόν τε καὶ ἀπέραντον. Cf. *Strom.* 1.169.4; *Quis div.* 37, 1; *Exc.* 6, 2*; 7, 3*; 8, 2; 9, 3.

[45] *Quis div.* 37. Τί γὰρ ἔτι δεῖ; θεῶ τὰ τῆς ἀγάπης μυστήρια, καὶ τότε ἐποπτεύσεις τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, ὃν ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς μόνος ἐξηγήσατο. ἔστι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη καὶ δι' ἀγάπην ἡμῖν ἐθεάθη. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ πατήρ, τὸ δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς συμπαθὲς γέγονε μήτηρ. ἀγαπήσας ὁ πατὴρ ἐθηλύνθη, καὶ τούτου μέγα σημεῖον ὃν αὐτὸς ἐγέννησεν ἐξ αὑτοῦ·

[46] Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks, The Rich Man's Salvation* (trans. G.W. Butterworth; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 346–347.

[47] For the general metaphor, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

the nourishment.[48] Extending the metaphor, Clement comes to speak about the *fatherly breasts* which supply the children with milk.[49] At other times he applies the image to the Logos itself, calling the Logos the *care-soothing breast* of the Father.[50] Similarly in his famous hymn at the end of the *Paedagogue*, Clement writes "Christ Jesus, heavenly milk, pressed from the sweet breasts of the bride, gracious gifts of your wisdom. The tiny infants with tender mouths, suckled at the nipple of the Logos and filled with the dewy Spirit."[51] Therefore from the use of the divine epithets *Father* and *Mother* in *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37, it seems reasonable to conclude that Clement himself practiced this kind of inclusive imagery just as his Valentinian counterparts did.

Sharing Eternity

The passages above showed Clement discussing the idea that God does not have a name and is beyond perception. Humans can, however, acquire knowledge of God through the Logos or the Son of God. In philosophical terms Clement would call the Logos the energy and intellectual power of God. This section will discuss Clement's further elaborations on the relationship between God and Logos.

> "The most perfect and most holy and most lordly and most princely and most royal and most beneficent is the nature of the Son, which is most closely connected to the One Almighty. This is the highest authority, which orders all things according to the will of the Father and holds the helm of the universe excellently, working all things with inexhaustible

[48] *Paed.* 1.39.3. τοῦ παντρόφου καὶ γενεσιουργοῦ θεοῦ "by the all-nourishing and creating God." *Paed.* 1.41.2. πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ τροφέως "by God, the nourisher." *Paed.* 42, 3: ὁ λόγος τὰ πάντα τῷ νηπίῳ, καὶ πατὴρ καὶ μήτηρ καὶ παιδαγωγὸς καὶ τροφεύς "The Logos is everything to the child, both father and mother and paedagogue and nurse."

[49] *Paed.* 1.46.1. ἐντεῦθεν τὸ ζητῆσαι μαστεῦσαι καλεῖται, ὅτι τοῖς ζητοῦσιν νηπίοις τὸν λόγον αἱ πατρικαὶ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας θηλαὶ χορηγοῦσι τὸ γάλα. "Therefore to seek is called μαστεῦσαι, since the fatherly breasts of love for humans supply the children who seek the Logos." Cf. *Paed.* 1.43, 3. Ἡ τροφὴ τὸ γάλα τοῦ πατρός, ᾧ μόνῳ τιτθευόμεθα οἱ νήπιοι. "The nutriment is the milk of the Father, by which alone we infants are nourished."

[50] *Paed.* 1.43.4: δι' οὗ πεπιστευκότες εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τὸν "λαθικηδέα μαζὸν" τοῦ πατρός, τὸν λόγον, καταφεύγομεν "we who through him have put our faith in God, flee to "the care-soothing breast" of the Father, the Logos." For λαθικηδέα μαζὸν, see Homer, *Iliad* 22.83.

[51] *Paed.* 3 Hymn 42–50. Χριστὲ Ἰησοῦ, / γάλα οὐράνιον / μαστῶν γλυκερῶν / νύμφης χαρίτων / σοφίας τῆς σῆς, / ἐκθλιβόμενον./Οἱ νηπίαχοι / ἀταλοῖς στόμασιν / ἀτιταλλόμενοι, / θηλῆς λογικῆς / πνεύματι δροσερῷ / ἐμπιμπλάμενοι, / …

> and indefatigable power, looking attentively through its actions at the hidden thoughts (of the Father). For he never departs from his own watchtower, the Son of God, not being divided, not cut off, not moving from place to place, but always being everywhere and not being contained anywhere, all mind, all paternal light, all eye, seeing everything, hearing everything, knowing everything, examining the powers by his power."[52]

Clement describes the nature of the Son here in superlative terms as the highest authority most closely connected to God.[53] This closeness appears also from the epithets, some of which had been used elsewhere as epithets for God but are being transferred here to the Son. There are subtle reminiscences of other sources: the Son is said to hold the helm (οἰακίζει) of the universe. A saying of Heraclitus transmitted by Hippolytus speaks in almost the same terms about the thunderbolt of Zeus steering the universe.[54] The idea of the divine government of the cosmos is well known, but Clement stays close to Heraclitus' words. There is also a combination of modifiers mentioning the inexhaustible (ἀκάματος) and indefatigable (ἄτρυτος) power; the same words surface again in the work of Plotinus to describe the infinite power of life.[55] The watchtower (περιωπή) is another marker, this time for an image Plato had used. In the *Protrepticus* Clement overtly referred to Plato's image in a discussion about God, maintaining that Greek philosophers, particularly Plato, sometimes touched on the truth. In this context Clement comments "therefore and in spite of themselves they (the philosophers) acknowledge that God is one, that he is indestructible and unbegotten, that somewhere in the outer spaces of heaven in his

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[52] *Strom.* 7.5.3 – 5.5.3. τελειοτάτη δὲ καὶ ἁγιωτάτη καὶ κυριωτάτη καὶ ἡγεμονικωτάτη καὶ βασιλικωτάτη καὶ εὐεργετικωτάτη ἡ υἱοῦ φύσις ἡ τῷ μόνῳ παντοκράτορι προσεχεστάτη. 4. αὕτη ἡ μεγίστη ὑπεροχή, ἣ τὰ πάντα διατάσσεται κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἄριστα οἰακίζει, ἀκαμάτῳ καὶ ἀτρύτῳ δυνάμει πάντα ἐργαζομένη, δι' ὧν ἐνεργεῖ τὰς ἀποκρύφους ἐννοίας ἐπιβλέπουσα. 5. οὐ γὰρ ἐξίσταταί ποτε τῆς αὐτοῦ περιωπῆς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐ μεριζόμενος, οὐκ ἀποτεμνόμενος, οὐ μεταβαίνων ἐκ τόπου εἰς τόπον, πάντῃ δὲ ὢν πάντοτε καὶ μηδαμῇ περιεχόμενος, ὅλος νοῦς, ὅλος φῶς πατρῷον, ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, πάντα ὁρῶν, πάντα ἀκούων, εἰδὼς πάντα, δυνάμει τὰς δυνάμεις ἐρευνῶν.

[53] See also Osborn, *Philosophy of Clement*, 44.

[54] Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 64 in Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9 10: τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει Κεραυνός… Cf. Irenaeus, *Fragm. Gr.* in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.2.

[55] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.12: Ἐὰν οὖν λάβῃς ἀένναον ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπειρίαν, φύσιν ἀκάματον καὶ ἄτρυτον καὶ οὐδαμῇ ἐλλείπουσαν ἐν αὐτῇ, "Conceive it as a power of an ever-fresh infinity, a principle unfailing, inexhaustible, at no point giving out, brimming over with its own vitality" (trans. Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page); see also Porphyrius, *Sententiae* 40.

own personal watchtower, he truly exists forever."[56] The full argument in Plato's passage was that the souls after fulfilling their "rotations" fell on the earth and that the helmsman of the universe withdrew in a kind of hands-off fashion to his watchtower to let the earth turn backwards.[57] It is clear that Clement does not allude to the full Platonic myth but only to the single image of the watchtower, as the vantage point of God. In the passage above, *Strom.* 7.5.5, Clement applies the image not to the supreme God as he had done in *Protr.* 68.3, but to the Son, God's creative power governing the universe.

In pantheistic terms this power is said to be always everywhere, not being contained anywhere, all mind, all paternal light, all eye, seeing everything, hearing everything, knowing everything. This terminology and, particularly, the notion of seeing, hearing, and knowing everything has been linked to a saying of Xenophanes, preserved in Sextus. It maintains that God is one, supreme among gods and men, and not like mortals in body or in mind, and that the whole of God sees, the whole perceives, and the whole hears.[58] Somehow this notion managed to influence Christianity at an early stage. Irenaeus gives a similar rendering when he speaks about the God of the universe "being all thought, all will, all mind, all light,[59] all eye, all ear, the whole fountain of all good things."[60] Clement uses a part of the phrase again later but in a more cautious way when he says "God is all ear and all eye, if one wants to use these words."[61] Again, Clement has no problems

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[56] *Protr.* 68.3: Οὗ δὴ χάριν καὶ ἄκοντες μὲν ὁμολογοῦσιν ἕνα τε εἶναι θεόν, ἀνώλεθρον καὶ ἀγένητον τοῦτον, ἄνω που περὶ τὰ νῶτα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καὶ οἰκείᾳ περιωπῇ ὄντως ὄντα ἀεί·

[57] 1. Plato, *Politicus* 272e: πάσας ἑκάστης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς γενέσεις ἀποδεδωκυίας, ὅσα ἦν ἑκάστῃ προσταχθὲν τοσαῦτα εἰς γῆν σπέρματα πεσούσης, τότε δὴ τοῦ παντὸς ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης, οἷον πηδαλίων οἴακος ἀφέμενος, εἰς τὴν αὑτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη, τὸν δὲ δὴ κόσμον πάλιν ἀνέστρεφεν εἱμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία. "since every soul had fulfilled all its births by falling into the earth as seed its prescribed number of times, then the helmsman of the universe dropped the tiller and withdrew to his place of outlook, and fate and innate desire made the earth turn backwards." (trans. Harold N. Fowler).

[58] Xenophanes, *Fragm.* 24 D.-K. (in Sextus, *Math.* 9.144). εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος, οὔ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδὲ νόημα. οὖλος ὁρᾶι, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δέ τ' ἀκούει.

[59] These words are missing in the old Latin translation.

[60] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1 (Harvey) = 1.12, 2 (SC) = Epiphanius, *Fragm.* 7, *Pan.* 33.2. ὅλος ἔννοια ὤν, ὅλος θέλημα, ὅλος νοῦς, ὅλος φῶς, ὅλος ὀφθαλμὸς, ὅλος ἀκοὴ, ὅλος πηγὴ πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

[61] *Strom.* 7.37.6. ὅλος ⟨γὰρ⟩ ἀκοὴ καὶ ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, ἵνα τις τούτοις χρήσηται τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, ὁ θεός.

in transferring epithets used for God to the Son, and he employs common philosophical vocabulary, interweaving this seamlessly with biblical quotes.[62]

In the following passage Clement elaborates further on the relationship between God, the Logos and believers.

> "For this was the wisdom in which the almighty God rejoiced; for the Son is the power of God, since he is the primal Logos of the Father before any of the things that came into being; he has been properly called his Wisdom and Teacher of those formed by him. Not distracted by any desire would he ever abandon the care for people; when he took up the flesh naturally susceptible to suffering he trained it to the condition of impassibility. How now would he be Savior and Lord, if not Savior and Lord of all? But he is Savior of the believers because they wanted to have knowledge, and Lord of unbelievers, until they are able to confess and obtain the customary and appropriate beneficence that comes through Him. All activity of the Lord has a reference to the Almighty, and the Son is so to speak the energy of the Father. The Savior would never be able to hate people; because of his exceeding love for humans he did not disdain the human flesh that is susceptible to suffering but clothed himself with it; he came for the common salvation of humans, for the faith of those who chose it is commonly shared. He would never neglect his own work either, because in the human alone of all other creatures a conception of God was instilled at creation. Nor would there be any other better and more suitable arrangement for humans than the one drawn up by God."[63]

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[62] As can be also seen from the subsequent passage, *Strom.* 7.5.6, in which elements from Luke 2:13 and from Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e have been combined. *Strom.* 7.5.6 τούτῳ πᾶσα ὑποτέτακται στρατιὰ ἀγγέλων τε καὶ θεῶν, τῷ λόγῳ τῷ πατρικῷ τὴν ἁγίαν οἰκονομίαν ἀναδεδεγμένῳ "A whole army of angels and gods is placed under his command, he, the paternal Logos who has received the holy government" Cf. Luke 2:13 καὶ ἐξαίφνης ἐγένετο σὺν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ πλῆθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου αἰνούντων τὸν θεὸν καὶ λεγόντων, Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας. Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e. ὁ μὲν δὴ μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεύς, ἐλαύνων πτηνὸν ἅρμα, πρῶτος πορεύεται, διακοσμῶν πάντα καὶ ἐπιμελούμενος· τῷ δ' ἕπεται στρατιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων, κατὰ ἕνδεκα μέρη κεκοσμημένη.

[63] *Strom.* 7.7.4–8.2. 7.4. αὕτη γὰρ ἦν ⟨ἡ⟩ σοφία "ᾗ προσέχαιρεν" ὁ παντοκράτωρ θεός· "δύναμις" γὰρ τοῦ "θεοῦ" ὁ υἱός, ἅτε πρὸ πάντων τῶν γενομένων ἀρχικώτατος λόγος τοῦ πατρός, καὶ "σοφία" αὐτοῦ κυρίως ἂν καὶ διδάσκαλος λεχθείη τῶν δι' αὐτοῦ πλασθέντων. 5. οὐδὲ μὴν ὑπό τινος ἡδονῆς περισπώμενος καταλείποι ποτ' ἂν τὴν ἀνθρώπων κηδεμονίαν, ὅς γε καὶ τὴν σάρκα τὴν ἐμπαθῆ φύσει γενομένην ἀναλαβὼν εἰς ἕξιν ἀπαθείας ἐπαίδευσεν. 6. πῶς δ' ἂν εἴη σωτὴρ καὶ κύριος, εἰ μὴ πάντων σωτὴρ καὶ κύριος; ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν πεπιστευκότων σωτὴρ διὰ τὸ γνῶναι βεβουλῆσθαι, τῶν δὲ ἀπειθησάντων κύριος, ἔστ' ἂν ἐξομολογήσασθαι δυνηθέντες οἰκείας καὶ καταλλήλου τῆς δι' αὐτοῦ τύχωσιν εὐεργεσίας. 7. πᾶσα δὲ ἡ τοῦ κυρίου ἐνέργεια ἐπὶ τὸν παντοκράτορα τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἔχει, καὶ ἔστιν ὡς εἰπεῖν πατρική τις ἐνέργεια ὁ υἱός. 8, 1 οὐκ ἂν οὖν ποτε ὁ σωτὴρ μισάνθρωπος, ὅς γε

The Son is described here as the power and the energy of God. Clement maintains that all activity of the Son is related to God. Elsewhere Clement had argued that the Son could be considered the collective center of the multiple powers of God.[64] In this way the Son means accessibility to the unknowable and invisible God. As Clement pointed out, God is not subject to demonstration *but* the Son is; the latter represents all things collectively as One. The emphasis in the passage, however, is not so much on the philosophical implications of the relationship between God and Logos but on the position of the Logos as the mediator between God and the created world. Therefore it should not come as a surprise that the Platonic overtones recede here to make place for biblical allusions. After all, there is not much space in a Platonic environment for an incarnate Logos, who, at least in theory, would be subject to the perils of the material world and human flesh. Clement is quick to assert that, although the Son did not despise human flesh, which by nature would be susceptible to suffering, he trained it to a condition of *apatheia*, thus not being subject to any passion, emotion or suffering.

Clement alludes to the role of the Logos not only in the context of human salvation but also in connection with the creation of the world. He refers to the idea that a conception of God was introduced at creation. In *Strom.* 5.87.1, Clement reflects more overtly on the same idea, thereby alluding to Gen 2:7. He writes "the human being is far from being bereft of a divine idea; the human who, as is written, partook of the inspiration at creation, sharing in a purer nature than

διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν φιλανθρωπίαν σαρκὸς ἀνθρωπίνης εὐπάθειαν οὐχ ὑπεριδών, ἀλλ' ἐνδυσάμενος, ἐπὶ τὴν κοινὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐλήλυθεν σωτηρίαν· κοινὴ γὰρ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἀνθρωπίνης εὐπάθειαν οὐχ ὑπεριδών, ἀλλ' ἐνδυσάμενος, ἐπὶ τὴν κοινὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐλήλυθεν σωτηρίαν· κοινὴ γὰρ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἑλομένων. 2. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοῦ ἰδίου ποτ' ἂν ἀμελοίη ἔργου τῷ μόνῳ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ἀνθρώπῳ ἔννοιαν κατὰ τὴν δημιουργίαν ἐνεστάχθαι θεοῦ. 3. οὐδ' ἂν βελτίων τις ἄλλη καὶ ἁρμονιωτέρα διοίκησις ἀνθρώπων εἴη τῷ θεῷ τῆς τεταγμένης.

[64] *Strom.* 4.156.1. ὁ μὲν οὖν θεὸς ἀναπόδεικτος ὢν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστημονικός, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς σοφία τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτῳ συγγενῆ, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει καὶ διέξοδον. πᾶσαι δὲ αἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ πνεύματος συλλήβδην μὲν ἕν τι πρᾶγμα γενόμεναι συντελοῦσιν εἰς τὸ αὐτό, τὸν υἱόν, "God now who is not subject to demonstration is not subject to scientific knowledge; the Son, however, is wisdom and knowledge and truth and so many other things that are related; he is also susceptible to demonstration and description. All the powers of the spirit collectively become one thing and end up in the same entity, the Son"; See also Osborn, *Philosophy of Clement*, 41–42.

the other living beings."[65] Thus the role of the Savior is intrinsically bound to the role of the Logos at the creation.

For contrast, another passage sketches the relationship between God and the Logos in more philosophical terms.

> "God who is without beginning, is the perfect principle of the universe, and the creator of the beginning. In so far as he is being, he is the principle of the physical part, as far as he is the good, the principle of the ethical part, and in so far as he is mind, he is the principle of the logical and critical part. Therefore also the Logos is the only teacher, son of the mind of the father, the instructor of the human being."[66]

This is a play on the words ἀρχὴ (beginning or principle) and ἄναρχος (without beginning). God, who is without beginning, is called the beginning (or principle) of all and the maker of the beginning (or principle). God is the principle of the physical, ethical and logical parts, which as τόποι cover the three main divisions of the philosophical spectrum. The logical part evokes the Logos in his intermediary role of transmitting things related to the divine mind and teaching them to humans. In his speculation on the *beginning without beginning* (ἄναρχος ἀρχή), Clement could have been inspired by Tatian, who also wrote that God alone was without beginning and that he was the beginning of the universe.[67] Clement applies the epithet (ἄναρχος) both to God and to the Son in a way that we have seen in other instances.

This brings us to the question of how Clement views the relationship in the divine realm between God and Logos or between Father and Son. What elements unite the Father and the Son and what distinguish them from each other in Clement's thinking? We saw that many of the epithets could migrate from one to the other, which indicates that Clement sometimes thought of the divine as a whole in the same terms. There are, however, other instances in which Clement uses epithets for one rather than the other. For instance, the epithet "Almighty" or "Ruler of all" (παντοκράτωρ) is primarily used for the supreme

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[65] *Strom.* 5.87.4 πολλοῦ γε δεῖ ἄμοιρον εἶναι θείας ἐννοίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὅς γε καὶ τοῦ ἐμφυσήματος ἐν τῇ γενέσει μεταλαβεῖν ἀναγέγραπται, καθαρωτέρας οὐσίας παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα μετασχών.

[66] *Strom.* 4.162.5. ὁ θεὸς δὲ ἄναρχος, ἀρχὴ τῶν ὅλων παντελής, ἀρχῆς ποιητικός. ᾗ μὲν οὖν ἐστιν οὐσία, ἀρχὴ τοῦ φυσικοῦ τόπου· καθ' ὅσον ἐστὶν τἀγαθόν, τοῦ ἠθικοῦ· ᾗ δ' αὖ ἐστι νοῦς, τοῦ λογικοῦ καὶ κριτικοῦ τόπου· ὅθεν καὶ διδάσκαλος μόνος ὁ λόγος, υἱὸς τοῦ νοῦ πατρός, ὁ παιδεύων τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

[67] Tatian, *Orat.* 4.1. θεὸς ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἔχει σύστασιν ἐν χρόνῳ, μόνος ἄναρχος ὢν καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπάρχων τῶν ὅλων ἀρχή. See also *Orat.* 5.3.

God; this shows that Clement also wanted to distinguish them. As Eric Osborn has described it; on the one hand, Clement wants to preserve the transcendence of God and the immanence of the Logos; for that purpose he would accentuate the differences. On the other hand Clement was equally concerned to maintain the divine unity and on those occasions would emphasize the unifying elements.[68]

It is difficult for the modern reader not to think of centuries of debates about the divine and human elements in Christ. This is, however, an anachronistic vantage point, since the Christological debates took place well after Clement's lifetime. It took the genius of an Origen first to pose the problem of the unification of divine and human in Christ and then to find solutions. Clement hardly seems to have considered the problem in those terms. The two strands of God's transcendence and imminence on the one hand and God's unity on the other seem to have existed side by side in Clement's thinking. He would stress one side or the other in relation to the issues at hand. There is a similar ambiguity when Clement speaks about bodies and souls. Compared to material beings or things on earth, souls are incorporeal and without form, but compared to the divinity of the Son they have measurable bodies and are perceptible. In turn, Clement has the same explanation, but on a higher level, for the Son: compared to the celestial beings, the archangels, protoctistes and so on, the Son is incorporeal and of the same οὐσία as the Father, but compared to the Father he is perceptible and has his own individuality.[69]

Resembling God

For Clement the only way for humans to have access to God was through the Logos, and he went on to indicate how this access might develop through human action.

> "The first assurance of knowing God—after the confidence generated by the teaching of the Savior—is to think that abstaining from any wrongdoing in any way is exactly what is suitable to the knowledge of God. Thus the best thing on earth is the most pious human, and the best

[68] Osborn, *Philosophy of Clement*, 40.

[69] See Annewies van den Hoek, "Origen's role in formulating later Christological language: the case of ἀνάκρασις," in *Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. W.A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 39–50.

> thing in heaven is an angel, who in a closer and already purer region shares in the eternal and blessed life."[70]

Human access to knowledge of God is described as a process of learning and training. One of the important roles of the Logos is as a teacher, not only of the right kind of beliefs but also of the right kind of behavior. How people should live is a theme that is developed abundantly in Clement's works: humans should restrain themselves in their lifestyles and follow a strict ethical code. They should rid themselves of most things human and detach themselves from a large part of human experience: desires, emotions, and passions. The goal is to reach a condition that is without any of the annoying disturbances that come from the sensual world. Clement maintains that the road to knowledge is paved with good deeds and abstention from evil. Linking knowledge to ethics is hardly Clement's own invention; Plato had written that no one who believes, according to the laws, in the existence of the gods has ever done an impious deed voluntarily, and Clement seems to develop his speculation along these lines.[71] In a description reflecting another Platonic theme, Clement speaks about regions in which souls dwell, some of which are more pure than others. The souls of angels are less affected by the material world and therefore closer to eternity than even the most pure human soul.

> "Those then who choose to belong to him are those perfected through faith. Thus the Son establishes himself as the cause of all good things by the will of the Almighty Father; for he is the primary power that produces movement, a power that cannot be perceived by sense perception. For it was not what it appeared to be to those who were unable to contain it because of the weakness of the flesh, but by taking up the sensitive flesh he came to show what was possible for humans by obeying the commandments."[72]

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[70] *Strom.* 7.5.1. Πίστις οὖν τοῦ εἰδέναι θεὸν ἡ πρώτη μετὰ τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος διδασκαλίας τὴν πεποίθησιν τὸ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ἄδικα δρᾶν, τοῦτ' εἶναι πρέπον ἡγεῖσθαι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ. 2. ταύτῃ κράτιστον μὲν ἐν γῇ ἄνθρωπος ὁ θεοσεβέστατος, κράτιστον δὲ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄγγελος, ὁ πλησιαίτερον κατὰ τόπον καὶ ἤδη καθαρώτερον τῆς αἰωνίου καὶ μακαρίας ζωῆς μεταλαγχάνων.

[71] Plato, *Leg.* 10.885b. Θεοὺς ἡγούμενος εἶναι κατὰ νόμους οὐδεὶς πώποτε οὔτε ἔργον ἀσεβὲς ἠργάσατο ἑκὼν.

[72] *Strom.* 7.8.5. οὗτοι δ' ἂν εἶεν οἱ ἑλόμενοι οἰκεῖοι εἶναι αὐτῷ, οἱ διὰ πίστεως τελειούμενοι. οὕτως ἁπάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν θελήματι τοῦ παντοκράτορος πατρὸς αἴτιος ὁ υἱὸς καθίσταται, πρωτουργὸς κινήσεως δύναμις, ἄληπτος αἰσθήσει. 6. οὐ γὰρ ὃ ἦν, τοῦτο ὤφθη τοῖς χωρῆσαι μὴ δυναμένοις διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός, αἰσθητὴν δὲ ἀναλαβὼν σάρκα τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώποις κατὰ τὴν ὑπακοὴν τῶν ἐντολῶν δείξων ἀφίκετο.

In Clement's thought faith and knowledge are two stages in the process leading to perfection. The Logos in its role as the primary power of God initiates this process, but it is the Logos in its incarnate form that guides people on their way to knowledge. Clement explains in the passage below how this works in philosophical terms.

> "For especially a "statue which is divine and resembles God" is the soul of a just person; in which through obedience to the commands is enclosed and established the Leader "of all mortals and immortals, King" and Parent of good people, true Law and Right and eternal Word, being the One Savior to each individually and all in common. This is the truly Only Begotten, the impressed image of the glory of the King of all and Almighty Father, who impresses the gnostic with the seal of perfect contemplation according to his own image; so that there is now a third divine image, which resembles the second cause as much as possible, the real life, through which we live a true life; copying for us, so to speak, the one who has become a gnostic, who is engaged in things that are firm and fully unchangeable."[73]

With a quotation from a Greek tragic poet, unattested otherwise, Clement declares that the soul of a just person is a divine statue that resembles God. A second quotation could be from Pindar or another poet who wrote in his style. These quotations are accompanied by philosophical reminiscences, such as when he calls the Logos "second cause." Clement adds a cautionary note when he says that the "third image" resembles the second cause "as much as possible." The background for this caution is the famous passage from Plato's *Theaetetus*, in which Socrates had argued that the existence of evils was inherent in human nature and the material world. Therefore one should try to escape these evils as quickly as possible and become like God as far as possible.[74] This became a favorite passage for Christian authors including Clement, who refers to it about twenty times.[75]

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[73] *Strom.* 7.16.5. μάλιστα γὰρ ἄγαλμα θεῖον καὶ θεῷ προσεμφερὲς ἀνθρώπου δικαίου ψυχή, ἐν ᾗ διὰ τῆς τῶν παραγγελμάτων ὑπακοῆς τεμενίζεται καὶ ἐνιδρύεται ὁ πάντων ἡγεμὼν θνητῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων, βασιλεύς τε καὶ γεννήτωρ τῶν καλῶν, νόμος ὢν ὄντως καὶ θεσμὸς καὶ λόγος αἰώνιος, ἰδίᾳ τε ἑκάστοις καὶ κοινῇ πᾶσιν εἷς ὢν σωτήρ. 6. οὗτος ὁ τῷ ὄντι μονογενής, ὁ τῆς τοῦ παμβασιλέως καὶ παντοκράτορος πατρὸς δόξης χαρακτήρ, ἐναποσφραγιζόμενος τῷ γνωστικῷ τὴν τελείαν θεωρίαν κατ' εἰκόνα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ὡς εἶναι τρίτην ἤδη τὴν θείαν εἰκόνα τὴν ὅση δύναμις ἐξομοιουμένην πρὸς τὸ δεύτερον αἴτιον, πρὸς τὴν ὄντως ζωήν, δι' ἣν ζῶμεν τὴν ἀληθῆ ζωήν, οἷον ἀπογράφοντες τὸν γνωστικὸν γινόμενον ἡμῖν, περὶ τὰ βέβαια καὶ παντελῶς ἀναλλοίωτα ἀναστρεφόμενον.

[74] διὸ καὶ πειρᾶσθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχιστα. φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν·

[75] See Index Stählin.

The assimilation to God is an important theme, which Clement revisits on many occasions.[76] The wording is not always the same; sometimes Clement is inspired by Plato, at other times by Paul.[77] The most frequent terms that he uses to express the theme are: to assimilate (ἐξομοιόω), to imitate (μιμέομαι), to follow (ἕπομαι), and to draw near (συνεγγίζω). Both God and the Logos can be objects of the assimilation. A strong ethical component usually accompanies the human soul in its attempt to become like God. In an earlier book Clement explains what the Platonic restriction "as far as possible" means in a Christian context: "practicing restraint, we set out on a journey in purity toward piety and activity conform to God, as "far as possible" for us in the likeness of the Lord, although in our nature we remain subject to death."[78]

In the passage above (*Strom.* 7.16.6), however, the emphasis is not so much on the concept of *homoiosis* or *mimesis*, but rather how the connection with God was made possible in the first place. In a succinct way, Clement had expressed this idea in one of his earliest works, the *Protrepticus*, referring to the concept that the human is coined after the die of the divine image. He writes "the service of God, which assimilates the human to God "as far as possible," assigns God as a suitable teacher, who alone is able to imprint on the human a worthy copy of God's likeness."[79]

In *Strom.* 7.16.6, Clement presents a much more elaborate scheme; all of the references, however, whether simple or complex go back to the account in Gen 1:27, in which the human being is created according to the image of God. In a three-tiered fashion God's image is impressed on the Logos, which in turn impresses the gnostic believer with its own image. The impression with the image of the image of God enables the gnostic believers to ascend to their ultimate goal of perfect contemplation (θεωρία). Clement is not alone in applying the idea of a triple-layered impression—Philo had done this before him,[80]

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[76] See, for example: *Protr.* 86, 2; *Strom.* 2.100.3–4; *Strom.* 2.133.3–4; *Strom.* 2.136.5.

[77] For example, *Strom.* 2.136.5.

[78] *Strom.* 2.80.5. … καθ' ἣν ἐγκρατευόμενοι καθαροὶ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ τὴν ἑπομένην ἀκολούθως τῷ θεῷ πρᾶξιν στελλόμεθα, ἐξομοιούμενοι τῷ κυρίῳ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἡμῖν, ἐπικήροις τὴν φύσιν ὑπάρχουσιν.

[79] *Protr.* 86, 2: Θεοσέβεια δὲ ἐξομοιοῦσα τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατάλληλον ἐπιγράφεται διδάσκαλον θεὸν τὸν καὶ μόνον ἀπεικάσαι κατ' ἀξίαν δυνάμενον ἄνθρωπον θεῷ.

[80] Philo, *Opif.* 69. See also Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History*

and also Valentinus had given his own version of the concept.[81] What is striking in this passage, however, is that Clement succeeds not only in including Greek poetry and philosophy but also a hoard of a biblical and perhaps liturgical elements. The result is a resounding and even poetic statement about a concept that is at the basis of Clement's theology, namely human nature in its relationship to God.*

of Interpretation (CBQMS 14; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983).

[81] In one of his few surviving fragments transmitted by Clement in *Strom.* 4.89.5–90.1.

* With many thanks to John Herrmann, my first reader, who made me understand what I wrote.

GOD IN EARLY LATIN THEOLOGY: TERTULLIAN AND THE TRINITY

Andrew B. McGowan*

> He that goes about to speak of and to understand the mysterious Trinity … if he reckons this mystery by the mythology of numbers, if he talks only of essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, distinctions without difference … may amuse himself … [T]here is no knowing of God theologically, and as he ought to be known, but by the measure of [experience].[1]

Introduction

Although the Carthaginian Christian theologian Tertullian contributed significantly and even foundationally to the complex notion of God as Trinity,[2] subsequent Christian tradition has struggled with his own complexity. An adherent of the ascetic movement called "New Prophecy," later to be labelled the heresy of Montanism,[3] his theology and his influence have been received with a certain caution. Typically the "orthodox" Tertullian of doctrine has been kept somewhat separate from the "heretical" advocate of various ascetic and idiosyncratic practices.

The tension between these roles as heretic and "Father" is most obvious in reading Tertullian's treatise *Against Praxeas* (c. 215),[4] his fullest exposition of God as Trinity but also one of his most "Montanist" writ-

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[1] Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), "Via Intelligentiæ," *Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 382–383.

[2] See Adolf von Harnack, "Tertullian in der Literatur der alten Kirche," in *Kleine Schriften zur alten Kirche* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), 1.247–281.

[3] "Montanism" is a term that occurs only considerably later, and exclusively in the works of critics.

[4] The fullest study of the theology of the treatise seems likely to remain that of J. Moingt, *Theologie trinitaire de Tertullien* (4 vols; Paris: Aubier, 1966–1969). A shorter account of Moingt's exposition of key issues regarding the reconciliation of *monarchia*

ings. *Against Praxeas* was provoked by the (re-)appearance in Carthage of a monarchian theological tendency.[5] Father and Son, the obscure "Praxeas" and his followers argued, were simply two ways of speaking of God, or two ways God was known at different times.[6] God was really, and only, one; the same one God had been present on the cross and at creation.

In a treatise regarded as foundational to subsequent trinitarian doctrine, Tertullian's understatement concerning the Holy Spirit is notable, not least because the New Prophecy itself made very strong affirmations about the present role and reality of that "Paraclete" (John 14:16 etc.). In fact this pneumatological understatement was not unusual for the time, but Tertullian's lack of emphasis on the third person of the Trinity stems in part from the character of the monarchian controversy; both sides work with a logic that denies or allows the possibility of a third divine person largely on the basis of whether there could be a second, that is, anything of "number" in God. The Holy Spirit was thus more often implied than described in what was primarily an argument about the identity of Father and Son. However at one or two points *Against Praxeas* does take up that implication, and presents the real existence and personality of the Holy Spirit at least more distinctly than many other writings of the first two or three centuries of Christian thought, including Tertullian's own earlier works.

Although the Holy Spirit is not a main subject of *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian also makes a link between his defence of God's existence in three *personae* and his advocacy of the Paraclete. Since Praxeas had rejected the New Prophecy and promoted monarchian theology, the defence of the Paraclete was not merely a theoretical matter.[7] The two causes were apparently strongly linked in local controversy at Carthage,

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and Trinity through the idea of economy is found in his "Le problème de Dieu unique chez Tertullien," *RevSR* 40 (1970), 337–362.

[5] "Modalist monarchianism" is a modern coinage. There is no indication that those attacked in *Against Praxeas* constituted a distinct grouping; this was a theological tendency at work within the same networks or groupings associated with the "Rule of Faith"—as was the New Prophecy.

[6] The identity of "Praxeas" is unknown. Allen Brent's restatement of the theory that it is a cipher for Callistus is attractive; see *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (VCSupp 31; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 525–535. I will use the name simply to indicate Tertullian's opponents and their views.

[7] On this see my article "Tertullian and the 'Heretical' Origins of the 'Orthodox' Trinity," *JECS* 14.4 (2006): 437–457.

where Tertullian saw himself as battling those who would both "drive out the Paraclete and nail up the Father" (*Prax.* 1.5).[8] So although he himself tended to argue that the New Prophecy was largely concerned with practice not doctrine, there have been suggestions that the New Prophecy really contributed to the development of Tertullian's trinitarian thinking, and thence that of the wider Church.[9]

The connection between the discipline of the New Prophecy and the doctrine of multiple divine persons was not shared widely however, or for long. The former waned where the latter prospered, and *Against Praxeas* came to be mined by later trinitarians for terminology or turn of phrase, rather than read and interpreted in its original scope and context. This treatise contains various doctrinal gems: the first use of the Latin word *trinitas*, and the ideas and terms necessary to speak of the distinct realities of Father, Son and Spirit as three "persons" sharing one essence or "substance." Yet Tertullian's concerns and conceptions require deeper examination than patristic proof-texting allows.

Elsewhere I have argued that the link between Tertullian's defense of the Paraclete and of the Trinity as a whole was not merely a coincidence of concerns on his part, but that the same Carthaginian Christian majority which rejected the New Prophecy was sympathetic to the monarchian doctrine taught by Praxeas.[10] Although Tertullian uses the distinction between *disciplina* and *doctrina* to defend the continuity of the New Prophecy with the Rule of Faith, he did understand the work of the Paraclete as relevant to doctrine, and not merely to asceticism.

The real question is therefore not whether the New Prophecy was relevant to his formulation of trinitarian doctrine, but how. This study suggests a more contextual reading of Tertullian's account of the Trinity in *Against Praxeas*. I will suggest aspects wherein *Against Praxeas* casts divine being and personhood in new and important ways that reflect Tertullian's immediate situation and concerns.

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[8] Translations from Tertullian's works are mine, based on the CCSL texts. Other primary sources are translated from editions as indicated. I am also indebted to also E.E. Evans, *Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas* (London: SPCK, 1948).

[9] Relatively recent advocates include Friedrich Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochen adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologische Quellen bei Irenaeus* [TU 46/2; Leipzig, 1930], 119–122) and K.E. Kirk ("The Evolution of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in A.E.J. Rawlinson [ed.], *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation* [London: Longmans, 1928], 157–237).

[10] McGowan, "Tertullian and the 'Heretical' Origins of the 'Orthodox' Trinity."

First, the way Tertullian deals with the divine "economy" involves a more historic and dynamic understanding of the Trinity than subsequent use of the static categories of "person" and "substance" suggests; it harmonizes with his sense of the place of the New Prophecy and of the work of the Paraclete, even though its significance may not depend solely on these.[11]

Second, Tertullian's treatise includes an important metaphorical discussion of trinitarian actions and relations. These images have been criticized as excessively concrete or limited, but give significant insight into the way Tertullian dealt with a received tradition in terms that hold stability and dynamism in tension. In particular the metaphors shed light on the difficult question of Tertullian's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and on how the New Prophecy contributed to his thought.

Third, Tertullian's pneumatology in this treatise deserves particular comment. His concerns include not only the details of the economy and of doctrine regarding the Spirit, but the role of the Spirit in the Church, teaching doctrine and establishing discipline. This qualitatively different sort of theologizing may not fit perfectly with later ways of reflecting on the Trinity, but is fundamental to understanding what Tertullian intended by faith in the triune God.

Economic Growth: The Trinitarian History of God

Monarchy and Trinity

Tertullian's account of distinct divine realities sharing a single substance is central to the trinitarian argument of *Against Praxeas*. The followers of Praxeas seem to have defended the unity of God by identifying Jesus Christ and the Father, rejecting any notion of actual plurality (as opposed to a mere diversity of names) as akin to the polytheism they had abandoned (*Prax.* 3.1). The question of any division or numeration of divine substance and person, focussed rhetorically on those two, was thus fundamental both for Tertullian and for his opponents, and the place of the Holy Spirit less immediately crucial. If "number" in God could itself be defended, then three-ness in particular could be

[11] The neglect of his approach has been aptly described as "one of the more perplexing episodes in the history of Christian doctrine" by Robert Markus, "Trinitarian Theology and the Economy," *JThSt* n.s. 9 (1958): 89.

defended easily and implicitly. The treatise thus centers on philosophical arguments for the compatibility of God's unity of substance with the reality of separate persons, and a variety of exegetical arguments that seek to demonstrate the two persons, Father and Son, in distinct action and in relation to one another.[12]

Tertullian refers to this divine three-ness as the οἰκονομία, the "disposition" or "economy" of divine substance. This is the means by which he and his allies can affirm the essential unity of God along with the distinct personal actions implied by his understanding of the "Rule of Faith," the summary of normative Christian doctrine (*Prax.* 2.1). While his use of the Greek term reflects knowledge of its technical use by earlier Christian thinkers, his own conception of the "economy" cannot simply be assimilated to those influences. Tertullian's economy is not the way God is revealed in history, but the self-disposition of God—rather more the "immanent" Trinity of later theology than the "economic." Tertullian does not regard the trinitarian arrangement of divine substance either as absolutely essential to the eternal being of God, or as merely or immediately related to the events of salvation history. Rather it emerges within a sort of divine history that is related to the work of creation, even though it largely precedes it. In the (very) beginning, God's substance has a trinitarian reality only *in nuce*.

The notion of original, undifferentiated divine substance is not unique to *Against Praxeas*. In the treatise *Against Hermogenes* (c. 200) which precedes the influence on of the New Prophecy, Tertullian had used concretely temporal terms to explain his understanding that the Son came into existence at a particular point, and that the attributes of God change, according both to the development of divine personal relations and also in relation to creation:

> For from the point at which those things over which a Lord's power might act began to exist [that is, at creation], God by acceding to that power was made and called Lord. Although God is a Father, and also a judge, God has not however always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of having always been God. For he was not Father prior to the Son, nor judge prior to sin. There was moreover a time (*fuit autem tempus*) when there did not exist with him either sin or Son, which were to make the Lord a Judge and a Father (*Herm.* 3.4).

[12] On Tertullian's use of the Stoic notion of relative disposition, see Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 125–127.

This strongly "economic" account of divine being serves to rebut the assertion that matter itself was eternal. For Hermogenes, such an eternal external, a reality other than God's own, seemed necessary to any assertion of eternal dominion. Tertullian denies both; only divinity itself, and the name "God," are eternal. Tertullian does not consider the possibility that the triune disposition of divine substance might itself have been eternal or essential to God's being, any more than that matter itself might be; for him this would have amounted to tritheism.

He adds two other examples to strengthen his case, those of the names Father and Judge. Strikingly, while Tertullian presents the status of Lord as bound up with creation, God's Fatherhood is subsequent; God the Lord becomes Judge and Father. The incarnation is the point at which this relationship, and designation, are established.

Tertullian's position had changed by the time he wrote *Against Praxeas*. There was, he says, a time before the generation of the Son when God was alone, not so much lacking as containing all else that would be Trinity (*Prax*. 7–9). The "Father is the whole substance" (*pater enim tota substantia est*, 9.2), which suggests a quite different understanding of the meaning of God's fatherhood, and potentially a subordinationist one; but this is primarily a claim for unity of divine substance. When he asserts that the reality of divine persons is not a matter of diversity but distribution, or not one of division but of distinction (9.1), Tertullian affirms that sequence is of relatively little importance, given a unity of divine substance.

Exploring the history of this primordial complex unity, Tertullian teases apart the ambiguity of the Greek λόγος (cf. John 1:1), developing a more complex Latin vocabulary that distinguishes between the eternal existence of God's intellect (*ratio*), and its subsequent utterance by God as word (*sermo* 5.3; cf. Gen 1:3). For Tertullian the divine *sermo* cannot be incorporeal or void, but must be substantial. This reflects the influence of Stoic metaphysics, wherein divine substance is a sort of material with properties, not the purely ideal divinity of Platonism. "So whatever the substance of the Word was, that I call a person, and for it I claim the name of Son: and while I acknowledge him as Son, I defend him as a second beside the Father" (7.9). He does not shy away from the Valentinian concept of "projections" from a primordial divine source, but seeks clearly to distinguish his own use, in which the Word is projected yet not cut off (*prolatum . . . sed non separa-*

tum) (8.5), from the radical distinctions he attributes to the aeons of the Valentinian system.

The act of primordial divine speech is identified with the actual generation of the Son. There is still a strongly "historic" aspect, and a narrative of the emergence of divine relative disposition. In fact Tertullian suggests as many as four stages in the process of bringing the second divine person into distinct reality, still using strikingly temporal language and again presenting an evolving nomenclature, but this time for the Word/Son:

> [*Sermo*] was first established (*conditus ab eo primum*) by him for thought under the name of *Sophia*… then begotten (*dehinc generatus*) for activity … thereafter causing him to be his Father (*exinde eum patrem sibi faciens*) by proceeding from whom he became Son … and in him thence he rejoices (*ad quem deinceps gaudens*) … (7.1–2)

This sequence goes from the initial "establishment" to a fulfilment of joyful relating. Yet only in a further process, creation itself, is the generation of the second person of the Trinity complete; the divine utterance *fiat lux* is the culmination of this birth by speech, the "complete nativity of the Word" (*nativitas perfecta sermonis* 7.1), who is by then also named Reason, *Sophia* and Son. God is Father and Son at this point, rather than only at the incarnation.

Tertullian thus takes diversity of divine speech in scripture as a real indication of the differentiated reality of divine persons, juxtaposed with the original and essential unity of divine being by means of the "economy." In exegesis of the Genesis creation narrative, he interprets the plural "let us make" (Gen 1:26) as evidence of more than one person at work, and contrasts it (*Prax.* 12.5) with the earlier and singular language of *fiat lux* (Gen 1:3), reading this change as reflecting the emergence of the "true light" of the Word (cf. John 1:9) at that first point in the creative process. He can even find three divine persons speaking in the Psalms: "Note also the Spirit speaking in the third person about the Father and the Son: 'The Lord said to my lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a stool for your feet'" (*Prax.* 11.7; cf. Ps. 110:1). Although it is "intended and arranged for the material of faith" (*Prax.* 13.6), for the sake of creation and salvation, the generation of the divine Word was accomplished with the spoken first act of creation.

The action of God in the world thereafter was accomplished through the Son (16.1–2) whom Tertullian now understands to be visible, whereas the Father cannot be. This aspect of the economy has significance

for the Son as well as for the world, for in these pre-incarnational interactions "even God [the Son] learned how on earth to converse with human beings … with the purpose of smoothing a path of faith for us, so that we might believe more easily that the Son of God has come down into the world" (*Prax.* 16.3). Tertullian thus seems to allow growth and learning for the Son as a distinct person, if not for the divine *substantia* as such.

The change between *Against Hermogenes* to *Against Praxeas* is significant. Where previously Tertullian regarded the divine economy as effected fully only in the actual course of salvation history, now he expounds inner-trinitarian relations as pre-historic. There was when the threeness of God was not, although this was before all things. The force of this move, relative to a monarchian understanding where the *personae* through which God acts in the world are inconsequential and ephemeral, is clear. Where Praxeas' followers saw the appearance or designation of Son or Father in the biblical narrative as a matter of indifference beyond the point at which it takes place, Tertullian sees the disposition of God's being as more enduring, linked with the fact of creation and the specifics of salvation, but prior to and not exhausted by them.

Tertullian thus continues to tread a path between regarding the threeness of divine persons as entirely essential to divine reality, and reducing the Trinity to a convenient set of designations for divine activity. A distinct shift has taken place, however, concerning the trinitarian disposition of divine substance, which is now carried out primarily before, rather than during, history.

Economic Models: Tertullian and Hippolytus

Tertullian holds that the Word is generated, personal, fully Son, and visible as the presence of God in history, from the beginning of creation—and hence necessarily prior to the incarnation—but that this "economy" of divine self-disposition is not part of God's essential substance or being.

This position invites comparison with the near-contemporary work *Against Noetus*, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, which addresses a similar monarchian debate. The precise relationship between Hippolytus' and Tertullian's works amounts to a curious sub-plot in the emergence of trinitarian theology, and in particular of theology in the West. Some sort of literary relationship between them must be acknowledged, and

although its precise character is contested, it seems most likely that Tertullian knew and used *Against Noetus* rather than vice-versa.[13] Like Tertullian, Hippolytus describes God's original self-subsistence, then the generation of the eternal Word. The divine Word has a history (*Noet.* 10–11), rather than being essential to eternal divine reality; God exists, and subsequently generates the Word. The Word emerges as a distinct person through different processes including creation, and the fulfilment of this divine self-disposition is incarnation: "for the Word unfleshed and by himself was not yet perfect Son, although [he was] perfect only-begotten Word" (15.7).[14] Sonship for Hippolytus is not a matter of relative disposition, but the result of the actual human birth of the Son.[15] The Word becomes a Son in the divine and human realms simultaneously.

So Hippolytus, like the earlier Tertullian, regarded the Word as eternally generated and personal, but not fully Son before the incarnation; the presence of God in history prior to the incarnation was that of the Father. This Hippolytan "economy" is therefore not essential to God's being, nor even to the relationship between God and creation, but is a correlate of the incarnation of the Son of God, and salvific in purpose.

The meaning of "economy" between Hippolytus and Tertullian involves apparent similarity giving way to a fairly profound difference. For Hippolytus, the "economy" is a matter of divine interaction with the world, as in the more enduring and better-known use of the term by Irenaeus.[16] In *Against Praxeas* however, the "economy" is fundamentally

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[13] For this discussion I use "Hippolytus" to refer to the author of *Against Noetus*. For two key views arguing for Hippolytus' use of Tertullian and vice versa, see Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century*, 529–535, and Manlio Simonetti, "Due note su Ippolito," *Ricerche su Ippolito* (Studia Ephemeridis "Augustinianum" 13; Rome: Institutum Patristicum "Augustinianum," 1977), 126–136.

[14] Translations based on the text of R. Butterworth, *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum* (Heythrop Monographs 2; London: Heythrop College, 1977).

[15] *Pace* Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century*, 211, 213–217, 529–535, etc. Brent equates Hippolytus' denial of complete sonship with denial of full personality, but it is visibility rather than personality that is really linked to complete sonship.

[16] Although Hippolytus' conception of the prolonged generation of the Word did not win ongoing support, his notion of "economy" is closer to most subsequent theology; see G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1952), 97–106. See also however Markus, "Trinitarian Theology and the Economy," 90–91.

independent of, and prior to, creation and history. It is the actual disposition of divine substance and relations, between Father, Word/Son and Spirit. Although aware of a prior Christian vocabulary of the divine economy such as that of Hippolytus, Tertullian uses it less technically, reflecting general use in Greek to refer to any specific arrangement of functions or tasks.[17] A few decades earlier Tatian had used "economy" similarly, as a way of speaking of the distinct eternal person of the Son with a role or function in mind: his generation is "by partition, not section, for what is severed is separated from its origin, but what has been partitioned takes on a distinctive function (οἰκονομία)" (*Or.* 5.2).[18]

Hippolytus' conception of a Son who was only really so at the incarnation would for Tertullian have been too similar to the monarchian view of a Father who "becomes" son at the incarnation. Some further light may be shed on this by consideration below of the two authors' use of an apologetic tradition of metaphors for the Trinity.

The Economy of the Spirit

How and when does the Holy Spirit emerge in the divine economy? Neither Tertullian nor Hippolytus pursues the divine self-disposition as fully on the place of the third person as regarding the first and second. In Tertullian's account of the Rule of Faith (*Prax.* 2.1), the self-disposition of economy is placed prior to creation regarding Father and Son, but the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is not mentioned until sent by the exalted Christ. In defending his use of language of "other" in speaking of Father, Son and Spirit with reference to one another, Tertullian seems to imply that the place of the Paraclete is analogous to that of the Word:

> Thus he calls the Paraclete other than himself (cf. John 14. 16), as we say the Son is other than the Father, so as to show the third degree in the Paraclete as we the second in the Son, for the sake of observing the economy. (*Prax.* 9.3).

This turgid statement seems to make the Paraclete part of the economy, but does not indicate how, or when.

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[17] Markus, "Trinitarian Theology," 95–96.

[18] Trans. Whittaker, pp. 11–12. This idea (but not the economic terminology) is also found in the work of Tatian's teacher Justin (*Dial.* 61.2). Evans (*Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas*, 35–36) suggests Tertullian used Tatian's work.

The clearest indication that the Holy Spirit is a third person prior to creation or incarnation comes in Tertullian's exegesis of divine plural statements from the creation narratives of the Old Testament (Gen 1:26; 3:22), where he counters suggestions that "let us make" suggests a merely angelic collaboration:

> On the contrary, because there already was attached to him a second Person, the Son, his Word, and a third, the Spirit in the Word, therefore he spoke in the plural, "Let us make," and "Our," and "for Us." For with whom was he making humanity, and in whose likeness? He spoke with the Son who was to assume humanity, and the Spirit who was to sanctify humanity, as though with ministers and intermediaries out of the unity of the Trinity (*Prax.* 12.3).

Although the Holy Spirit does exist as a person at this stage, the intriguing statement that the Spirit is "in the Word" raises another question. Tertullian seems to leave open the possibility that the Holy Spirit subsists in the Word or Son at this point and emerges into a fuller personal existence only later, with incarnation or Pentecost.[19] The assessment of this possibility is made harder by the fact that *spiritus* for Tertullian also refers to the divine substance or essence in general.[20] Yet the subsistence of the Spirit in the Word in the incarnation is also suggested in Tertullian's interpretation of Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross (Matt 27:46). It was, he says, "the voice of flesh and of soul, that is of humanity, not of Word and Spirit, that is of God" (*Prax.* 30.2).[21]

Tertullian's use of "Spirit" in these cases, not the distinctive term "Paraclete" applied to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, may imply a development in relative disposition and nomenclature not unlike those cases we have already noted in the divine economy regarding the Word. If the Holy Spirit is within the economy before time but becomes "Paraclete" in history, then the New Creation

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[19] William Tabbernee points out that the New Prophecy was accused of a dispensationalism that denied the fullness of the Holy Spirit even to the apostles, or of distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and the Paraclete; see "'Will the Real Paraclete Please Speak Forth!': The Catholic-Montanist Conflict over Pneumatology," in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current State of Pneumatology* (eds. B. Hinze and D.L. Dabney; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 103.

[20] Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, 131–132.

[21] This possibility ought not too quickly to be equated with a doctrine of procession *ab utroque*; see P.Th. Camelot, "'Spiritus a Deo et Filio' (Tertullien, *Adv. Prax.* 8)," *RSPT* 33 (1949): 31–33.

(see *Ieiun.* 14.2) constitutes the *nativitas perfecta Spiritus* just as the first, material creation was the moment when the Word and Son was complete and established by God.

The place of the Holy Spirit in the economy will be pursued further below. For the moment we can note that Tertullian's account of the economy attempts to steer between two unacceptable alternatives. One the one hand he sought to avoid the affirmation of multiple eternal and/or divine realities, which was unacceptable whether as Greco-Roman polytheism or as in the teaching of Hermogenes. On the other he rejected the belief that divine *monarchia* was unqualified by the real personhood of Son (and Spirit), which implied the birth and suffering of the Father (*Prax.* 1.1).[22]

The kind of "economic" trinitarianism represented by Hippolytus was also unacceptable to him, in so far as it posited fundamental changes in the relation between Father and Son within history. Tertullian instead places that history of divine relations within God, and outside of time. This is a stronger place from which he can oppose monarchianism, but it is also part of his strategy of depicting the New Prophecy and its teachings as consonant with God's ancient or eternal purpose, rather than as novel or counter to the Rule of Faith. If the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit active among the adherents of the New Prophecy, was a recent arrival, this was neither ephemeral change in God's being as the Monarchians would suggest, or a "sudden" appearance like that of Marcion's God (*Marc.* 3.2.1), but the new revelation of an aspect of God's being from of old.

The Paraclete in Parables

The Fire and the Sun: An Apologetic Tradition

Against Praxeas includes a series of metaphors for the unity of three divine persons: Tertullian likens the Trinity to each of a plant, a well, and the sun. These images have sometimes been considered of marginal importance, or even problematic in their capacity adequately to illustrate what was to become trinitarian orthodoxy. Viewed within Tertullian's context however, including his own previous use of such

[22] See Kevin McCruden, "Monarchy and Economy in Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean*," *SJT* 55 (2002): 334–335.

traditions and models, the trinitarian metaphors are far from marginal, but provide indications of how his thought develops in response to the New Prophecy and its defence, and just what sort of trinitarian God is at issue in the treatise.

Like the "economy" just considered, these images have a history within (and beyond) Tertullian's writings. In his earlier *Apology* (c. 198) Tertullian had argued for the real unity of the two (*sic*) divine persons, Father and Son. The Son, as an extension of the divine substance, is one with the Father (*Apol.* 21):

> And when a ray is extended from the sun, it is still part of the whole; the sun will still be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun, and the substance is not divided but extended … as light is kindled from light (21.12).

This combination of light-based images, sun and torch, is used to defend Christian trinitarianism (or at least the differentiation of divine substance implied by the incarnation) against two kinds of objections. The "torch" image—*lumen* here referring to a specific light or lamp—defends the transcendence of divinity against the implication of diminution of quality by division. There may be various torches lit from one original, but the fires of each and of their source are equal and undiminished. The "sun" image defends Christian monotheism against any implication that number, rather than unity, could be attributed in God through division. A ray may be distinguishable from its source the sun, but is an "extension" of the one reality. Together these images are used as demonstrations of how "substance" can be "extended" rather than "divided."

Both images were already familiar apologetic motifs. One actually precedes Christian usage; Philo of Alexandria in his work *On the Giants* speaks of the divine spirit given to Moses as undiminished by its being shared with the seventy elders (cf. Num 11:17), like fire distributed among thousands of torches (*Gig.* 25). The "torch" had also been applied to trinitarian relations by Christian apologists before Tertullian: Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 150) presents the generation of the divine Word as like a fire undiminished by lighting another from it (*Dial.* 61, 128). Justin's student Tatian had taken up the same imagery, in relation to the "economy" as previously discussed (*Or.* 5).

The earlier apologist Athenagoras (c. 180) had spoken of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Father using the "sun" image: "Further, this same holy Spirit, which is active in those who speak prophetically, we regard as an effluence of God which flows forth from

him and returns like a ray of the sun."[23] Athenagoras seeks a harmony between Christian monotheism and traditional and scriptural discourse concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit; his concern is unity, not distinction. Not surprisingly this image was also appealing to earlier monarchians, for whom it rightly stressed the ephemeral character of the Son relative to a divine unity. Justin records this sort of use, and thus rejected the metaphor (*Dial.* 128).

The argument of Hippolytus *Against Noetus* is unsurprising in this company:

> And so there was a second beside him. But saying "a second," I am not saying there are two Gods, but that it is only as light from light, or water from a fountain, or a ray from the sun (*Noet.* 11.1).[24]

An additional metaphor, of water, was already implied in Athenagoras and his talk of "flow." Hippolytus uses all three—torch, fountain and sun—to serve the same logic as Tertullian's in the *Apology* passage, where the fundamental or substantial identity of two elements is demonstrated.

The Paraclete's Proofs

In *Against Praxeas* Tertullian also initially multiplies the analogies to three:

> God produced the Word, as the Paraclete also teaches,[25] as a root produces new growth, a spring a river, and the sun a ray of light; for these also are kinds of 'projections' (προβολαί) of those things from which they proceed (8.5). Nor do I hesitate to call the shoot son of the root, and the river son of the spring and the ray son of the sun, for every source is a parent and everything that comes out of a source is its offspring—and especially the Word of God, who also strictly took the name of Son. Neither the shoot is cut off from the root, nor the river from the spring, nor the beam from the sun, just as the Word is not cut off from God (*Prax.* 8.5).

These expanded and slightly different images of origin and projection are combined with the same denial of separation found in Justin, Tatian and Hippolytus. The "torches" image has gone, however; to the famil-

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[23] William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 23.

[24] Text from R. Butterworth, *Hippolytus of Rome*, 59–61.

[25] "quemadmodum etiam Paracletus docet …" (CCSL 2.1167).

iar motifs of sun and spring is added that of a plant, which gives forth a shoot or branch. This new image actually takes pride of place, and has a remarkable attribution: the teaching of the Paraclete likens God's production of the Word to this vegetative process. This addition to a familiar and traditional set of motifs seems to come from an oracle of one of the New Prophets.

Tertullian has also created much stronger analogies that reflect his account of the economy, by taking each metaphor to a third stage or element: fruit, focal point and channel. Although Tertullian does little to explain the specific correlation of properties between the Trinity and trio of analogies, the parallels are of importance beyond the mere extension of "number" in God from two to three.

Each of the first elements in this trio of images is invisible: the root which is underground, the sun which cannot be looked at directly (*Prax.* 14.3), and the spring of water, from under the earth. This corresponds with Tertullian's strong insistence on the invisibility of the Father, prominent in his discussion of the qualities of Father and Son (*Prax.* 14–15).[26]

The second element, corresponding to the Word or Son, is by contrast that which can be seen, or more specifically emerges into existence and sight. The shoot of the plant, ray from the sun, and stream from the spring are the modes in which the invisible original extends itself and makes its reality known to the viewer. Sight is the crucial property that allows the metaphors to convey something beyond the general impact of "fire" (transcendence) and "sun" (unity). Again this corresponds directly to the place of the Word or Son in history, not simply in the incarnation but in general, since for Tertullian all the theophanies of the Old Testament must involve the Son, who is visible where the Father is not.

This more specific correlation between the properties of each element of the metaphors and the persons of the Trinity explains the omission of the "torches" image. That metaphor does not work in this schema, since one torch is as visible as another, and the properties of each are the same, except for the sequence of lighting.[27] These new and more elaborate metaphorical renderings of divine disposition thus

[26] After Irenaeus' example (*Haer.* 4.6).

[27] Tertullian's omission of the "torch" makes sense, where Hippolytus' omission of the "plant" would not, had he known it. This is one factor that makes Tertullian's knowledge and use of Hippolytus more likely than the reverse.

involve not just a third stage of general differentiation within a sort of unity, but a more specific set of trinitarian relations and qualities beyond those conveyed by the *topoi* of Justin and Hippolytus.

The Third Element

Tertullian goes on to add that it is also possible to think in terms of a third element in each metaphor:

> Moreover where there is a second there are two, and where there is a third there are three. For the Spirit is a third with God and the Son, just as the fruit is a third out of the shoot from the root, and the canal a third out of the stream from the spring, and the focal point a third out of the ray from the sun: yet it is in no way cut off from that origin from which it takes its properties. Thus the Trinity, flowing by entwined and connected degrees from the Father, in no respect obstructs the monarchy, while it protects the nature of the economy (8.7).

In other passages in *Against Praxeas* it is easier to see that references to the Holy Spirit as third divine person are straightforward extensions of the logic by which Tertullian has argued for the possibility of a second person (*Prax*. 4.1, 9.1, 3, 11.7, 12.3). The addition of a third is then taken to be simply the pursuit to another stage of the principle that there could be more than one. By implication, the addition of a third element in the metaphors might suggest simply the arithmetic elaboration of the metaphors, something more about quantity than quality.

Yet we have already noted that the specific qualities of the first and second metaphorical elements correspond with specific characteristics of Father and Son: their respective original invisibility, and consequent appearance to the beholder. This suggests that the third set of elements (fruit, channel, point of light) will have more to convey than simply "if two, then why not three."

Against Praxeas discusses the generation and characteristics of the second person of the Trinity in a way that allows comparison with the qualities of the second element of the metaphors, but there is no equivalent discussion for the Holy Spirit. This silence has to do with the actual monarchian debate, which clearly focussed on the relation between Father and Son. Yet the relatively oblique treatment of the Holy Spirit in terms of trinitarian *doctrina* may also indicate something more specific about Tertullian's understanding of the appropriate ways in which to speak of, or relate to, the various persons.

The third element of the metaphors could thus be a meaningful

and carefully crafted, if largely implicit, development of Tertullian's understanding of the third divine person. To test this possibility we have to consider the character of the third metaphorical elements, and to correlate the results with other indications of his understanding of the Paraclete.

Each of the third elements of the metaphors—like the second ones—involves a temporal aspect, and an implication of change, growth, and development (8.5–6). We have already noted that this is coherent with his account of the economy. More distinctively however they are the elements most concerned with ends or goals, and with human experience and participation. Fruit is tasted, and eaten. *Rivus*, here a channel used for obtaining water, flows for human use and consumption, rather than being simply a smaller stream derived from the larger *flumen*. The *apex* is the point at which light reaches a point or focus, the destination of the sun's rays where light is not only perceived in itself as ray, but acts to reveal objects for what they are.

The most distinctive metaphor is the first. Fruit is of course the aspect of the plant experienced: tasted and fed upon as source of life and nourishment. This biblical motif (Gal 5:22 etc.) is also found in other writings from the same period as *Against Praxeas*. In *On the Veiling of Virgins*, fruit appears as an image, not of the divine "economy," but of the flow of history and the roles of the respective divine persons in it:

> What then is the Paraclete's area of responsibility but this: that *disciplina* is directed, the Scriptures are revealed, that the intellect is reformed, that higher things are approached? Nothing is without its time: all things await their season … Look how creation itself advances little by little to bearing fruit. First comes the seed, and from the seed the shoot rises, and from the shoot the shrub struggles out. Then branches and leaves grow strong, and the whole called a tree expands: then follows the swelling of the bud, and the flower from the bud, and from the flower the fruit opens: the fruit itself, primitive for a while, and unformed, little by little, pursuing its time, is trained to the ripeness of its flavour. So also righteousness—for the God of righteousness and of creation is the same—was first in a rudimentary state, naturally fearing God. From there it advanced, through the Law and the Prophets, to infancy; then it exulted, through the Gospel, to youth: now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity (*Virg.* 1.8–10).

While this fulsome word picture is not about the divine "economy" in Tertullian's sense of the word, this history of "creation" and "righteousness" parallels, and eventually connects with, Tertullian's account of trinitarian life. The metaphor of *Against Praxeas* presents the Holy Spirit

as the fruit that proceeds from its trinitarian root, and that of *On the Veiling of Virgins* presents the same Spirit as the fruit that succeeds and fulfils earlier forms of righteousness. The Holy Spirit appears in both schemes, of divine disposition and of history, as the person or point—the *apex*—of the presence of God in human life.[28]

Pneumatology and the Paraclete

Doctrina and Disciplina

Approaches to the development of Tertullian's trinitarian theology have often focused on that divine self-disposition he terms the "economy." The vexed question of whether he becomes more or differently trinitarian, or merely more explicit about his confession of three divine persons, tends to have been answered by assessments of a small body of evidence, particularly the parallel discussions in the *Apology* and in *Against Praxeas* of the generation of the Word and Son of God.

In this study I have so far sought to elucidate two elements of Tertullian's discussion of the divine economy which point beyond it, and to suggest that historical and experiential aspects of trinitarian life are particularly important to his theology. An adequate account of Tertullian's position needs to consider the more historic aspect of the life and work of the Holy Spirit, as well as his presentation of the divine self-disposition.

Scholarship has also been inclined to distinguish sharply between Tertullian's discussions of the Holy Spirit in the "economy" and the Paraclete in history, in close relationship to his own categories of "doctrine" and "discipline."[29] Tertullian does seem to argue at some points that the work of the Paraclete is concerned less with the abiding, universal doctrine encapsulated in the Rule of Faith, than with the recent, specific teaching of disciplines associated with the New Prophecy. This position is in part apologetic, since Tertullian is at pains to demonstrate the continuity of the New Prophecy with faith of the Church. The Paraclete brings no new *doctrina*, but a new *disciplina*.

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[28] On Tertullian's sense of progressive revelation, see Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (HTS 52; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[29] See Jaroslav Pelikan, "Montanism and its Trinitarian Significance," *CH* 25 (1956): 99–109.

Yet this distinction has been exaggerated; in reality the connection is just as important. Trinitarian faith and the Holy Spirit are relevant to both *doctrina* and *disciplina*. Both in *Against Praxeas* and elsewhere, Tertullian persists in stating the place of the Holy Spirit, in the historic guise of the Paraclete, within *doctrina* also.

Tertullian invokes the pre-existence of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity in regard to the New Prophecy, not to mitigate the new revelation but as guaranteeing it, given their coherence:

> We indeed both in the past and all the more so now, as better instructed through the Paraclete who is the leader into all truth, believe in one God, but subject to this dispensation that we call the economy: that the one God has also a Son … who then, according to his promise, sent from the Father the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, as the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Prax.* 2.1).

Both the eternal existence of the Holy Spirit and the present role of the Paraclete are presented as part of the Rule of Faith. Tertullian also claims a better understanding of the Rule through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is:

> the preacher of one monarchy, but also the interpreter of the economy if one accepts the words of his new prophecy, and the leader into all truth which is in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to the Christian mystery (*Prax.* 30.5).

This revelatory and interpretive work is elaborated into a trinitarian theory of revelation in scripture:

> So in these [texts], few though they are, the distinctiveness of the Trinity is nonetheless clearly expounded: for there is the Spirit himself who speaks, the Father to whom he speaks, and the Son of whom he speaks. So also the others, which are statements made sometimes by the Father concerning the Son or to the Son, sometimes by the Son concerning the Father or to the Father, and sometimes by the Spirit, establish each person in their own distinctness. (*Prax.* 11.9–10).

The respective forms of speech distinguish not merely the fact of three persons, but their roles. The Spirit is both object of Christian faith and its active inspirer and facilitator.

What makes these different assertions about the Holy Spirit and *doctrina* coherent, rather than alternate situational sophistries, is that the Paraclete is presented by Tertullian both as the object of Christian faith, and as its active inspirer and facilitator. The Paraclete is new guarantor and teacher of the old *doctrina*.

The Economy and the Spirit in History

Tertullian's distinctive pneumatology then consists not only or not so much in whatever distinct emphasis he gives to the third divine person of the economy, but in the organic link between what is confessed about the Spirit in the Rule of Faith and what is done by and with the Spirit in the Church. It is the connection between these aspects, of *doctrina* and the "economy" of God and of *disciplina* and the life of the Christian community, which is crucial, not their separation.

The same interrelatedness of *disciplina* and *doctrina* is reflected in *On the Veiling of Virgins*: "What is the Paraclete's area of responsibility but this: that *disciplina* is directed, the Scriptures revealed, the intellect reformed, the higher things approached" (*Virg.* 1.5). A similar point is also made in the treatise *On Monogamy*, again of similar date with *Against Praxeas*:

> Moreover the Paraclete, having many things to teach fully which the Lord deferred to him will, in accordance with that precondition, first bear witness to Christ himself, as we have faith in him, together with the whole order of God the Creator, and will glorify Him, and will bring to remembrance things regarding him. And thus recognized out of this principal Rule, He will reveal those many things which relate to the disciplines . . . (*Mon.* 2.4).

The Paraclete is new guarantor and teacher of the old *doctrina.* Tertullian's account of the Rule of Faith beyond the argument of *Against Praxeas* thus confirms that the work of the Paraclete was first establishing the *doctrina* of the Father's and the Son's being, and then authenticating the new prophets and their ascetic message.

So the Paraclete is not merely an ephemeral disciplinary phenomenon unrelated to the eternal or essential being of God, but rather God's means of linking *disciplina* and *doctrina*, which are "bound and connected" (cf. *Prax.* 8.7) in a necessary but not primarily hierarchical sequence, like the persons of the Trinity themselves. Faith in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, involves the practice of the *disciplina* revealed by that Spirit, and not merely the logic or *doctrina* of the trinitarian economy of God.

This argument is embodied in his exposition and expansion of the traditional trinitarian metaphors. The Trinity is not merely the God allowed by the possibility of multiple persons sharing a similar substance, but the God demanded by the experiential or practical element of that reality—its fruit, life-giving water and illumination. The Son

may be known by sight like the shoot of a plant, in *doctrina*; but the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, must be experienced as its fruit, in *disciplina*.

Conclusion

Against Praxeas is Tertullian's account of the relation between the Father and the Son, as distinct persons sharing divine being; it is also his implicit account of the fruit borne by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, among some of the Carthaginian Christians.

If the treatise is the story of God's self-disposition and differentiated personal being, it is also a narrative of the differentiated being of the Carthaginian Christians themselves. Tertullian attempts to tell the history of God and of God's dealings with the world to counter the fluidity of monarchianism without excluding the dynamism of the New Prophecy. He seeks not only to explicate primeval distinctions in the godhead but to defend the highly-differentiated adherents of the prophetic movement without cutting them off from the *substantia* of the Carthaginian Christian population.

The first two elements of Tertullian's trinitarian treatise discussed here, the divine "economy" and the Paraclete-inspired elaboration of traditional trinitarian metaphors, give rise to a third assertion, that Tertullian's trinitarian doctrine actually involves both his own categories of "*doctrina*" and "*disciplina*." The treatise places the dynamic and developmental in tension with the permanence of eternal or transcendent realities, not only in terms of the eternal divine self-disposition, but in the intersection of divine and human life in the present.

A faith that genuinely engages with the distinct life of the trinitarian God is not constituted simply by correct confession of three persons in one substance, but by participation in the work of the Paraclete. Without this third element, one has a more-or-less binitarian theology—as some have noted before. With the Paraclete however, the truth of traditional *doctrina* is confirmed, and the power of the new *disciplina* is revealed. Both are necessary to speak of Tertullian's triune God.[30]

[30] My thanks to Tim Gaden, and to Graeme and Paulene Blackman, for assistance with research for this article, and to Lewis Ayres and Brian Daley, for the original discussion from which it arose as a separate reality.

KNOWING GOD IN THE *THEOLOGICAL ORATIONS* OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: THE HERITAGE OF ORIGEN

Joseph W. Trigg*

At the time of his death Lloyd Patterson was preparing to deliver a paper that dealt with Origen, among others, as an influence on the way Gregory of Nyssa understood the economy of salvation.[1] Scholars have often assumed that Origen must also have influenced his friend and namesake, Gregory of Nazianzus. John McGuckin, in his biography, states that "Nazianzen revealed himself as the true heir and successor of Origen of Alexandria" and argued that this applied, among other things, to Gregory's understanding of the theologian's role.[2] This seems likely on the face of it because Gregory of Nazianzus designated the gift of a copy of the *Philocalia*, a sensitively chosen collection of extended passages from Origen's works, to a correspondent as a "memento" of him and Basil. On the basis of that statement Gregory has been considered, at least since the time of the Byzantine author of the preface to that collection, as an editor of that work.[3] Even if we accept Marguerite Harl's strong case that the attribution of editorship is not actually implied in what Gregory said and not probable given what we know of his and Basil's lives, his statement still implies that he knew Origen's work and held it in high esteem.[4] Because of the common assumption that Gregory edited the *Philocalia*, scholars have long looked to Origen as a major source for his thought, making it

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[1] See Lloyd G. Patterson, "Pleroma: The human plenitude from Irenaeus to Gregory of Nyssa" in StPatr 34 (2001): 529–540.

[2] John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 10, and see also 110, n. 80. Nonetheless, in a comparable work, Jean Bernardi, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Le Théologien et son temps (330–390)* (Paris: Cerf, 1995), there is no mention of Origen.

[3] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle* 115 and *Philocalia*, Preface.

[4] Marguerite Harl, *Origène: Philocalie 1–20: Sur Les Écritures* (SC 302; Paris: Cerf, 1983), 20–27.

persuasive to ascribe common patterns of thought to Origen's influence. Thus Thomas Špidlík, in his presentation of Gregory's spiritual teaching, argues that Gregory builds on Origen's understanding of the relationship between contemplation (θεωρία) and action (πρᾶξις).[5] Likewise, F.X. Portmann attributes to Origen an understanding of divine pedagogy he sees as central to Gregory's thought.[6] It is not surprising, then, that writers see Origen's influence behind what is probably the most remarkable passage in his writings, *Oration* 31.25–27, where he speaks of an actual growth and change in the understanding of God, not simply between the Old Testament and the New, but as a continuing process that is going on in the church of his own time and will only be completed in an eschatological horizon. This process explains the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a coeternal and coequal person of the Trinity. Scholars such as Frederick Norris and Richard Hanson have pointed to Origen as a likely influence on this passage, but without demonstrating a specific connection.[7] Likewise, again without offering specifics, John McGuckin writes of the same passage that "Gregory has successfully, and in an incredible economy of words, compressed all of Origen's voluminous theory of spiritual progress (*prokope*) and finished off what the ancient teacher left undone: the correlation of the idea of eschatological ascent to the principle of divine revelation in history."[8] I would like to argue that detailed correspondences point to Gregory's having read and assimilated Origen's thought as we find it in his *Commentary on John* and specifically in the preface to that work.

A number of scholars have moved beyond earlier discussion of Origen as a source for Gregory by showing specific ways Gregory depended on him. Among them is Claudio Moreschini, who has written that Gregory of Nazianzus was "the most consistently Origenian of the

[5] Thomas Špidlík, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1971).

[6] F.X. Portmann, *Die göttliche Paidagogia bei Gregor von Nazianz* (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1954).

[7] Richard P.C. Hanson says that Gregory's discussion in 31.25 of the gradualness of God's revelation is "borrowed largely from Origen" but does not specify further (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988], 782). Frederick W. Norris likewise sees Origen behind this passage to the extent that it depicts, "A sovereign God who chooses to employ persuasion as the way he deals with human beings to whom he gave free will" (*Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus* [Leiden: Brill, 1991], 206).

[8] John McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 309.

major Cappadocian thinkers after Gregory Thaumaturgos."[9] Moreschini identified participation in the Logos, the interpretation of Moses' ascent on Sinai as a mystical ascent; the incomprehensibility of God, assimilation to God, a Platonizing vocabulary and other significant elements as evidence of Origen's influence on Gregory.[10] He has also shown that much of the Platonism ascribed to Gregory of Nazianzus comes not so much from a direct reading of Plato but from reading Origen and other Alexandrian authors.[11] In a rich discussion of Origen's understanding of the priesthood, Francis Gautier likewise shows how Gregory draws again and again on Origen, as he does, for example, in presenting the exercise of priesthood as a sacrifice of the contemplative life in order to serve others.[12] In another recent study, Anne Richard continually takes Origen into consideration, although she generally stresses the ways that Gregory differed from Origen even as he took him into consideration. Thus she finds a "gap" (*fossé*) between Origen and Gregory when it comes to anthropology and argues that Gregory rejected Origen's position on the fall of the angels, that he would have nothing to do with his suggestion that the sphere of the fixed stars could be the "earth" Christ said that the meek inherit (Matt 5:4) and that his references to "a world or worlds" does not imply that he was open to Origen's position on a plurality of worlds.[13] She claims, in particular, that Gregory was much more conscious than Origen of the limitations of language.[14] On the other hand, she shows how Gregory did depend heavily on Origen in his understanding of the generation of the Son and, by extension, of the Holy Spirit.[15]

Drawing on a key passage in the *Contra Celsum*, Jean Paul Lieggi argued that Origen and Gregory are profoundly in accord in their

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[9] Claudio Moreschini, *Filosofia e letteratura in Gregorio di Nazianzo* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), 309. All translations are my own.

[10] Moreschini, *Filosofia e letteratura*, 97–116.

[11] Claudio Moreschini, "Nuove considerazione sull'Origenismo di Gregorio Nazianzeno" in *Origene e l'Alessandrismo Cappadoce (III–IV secolo)* (ed. Mario Girardi and Marcello Marin; Bari: Edipuglia, 2000), 207–218.

[12] Francis Gautier, *La retraite et le sacerdoce chez Grégoire de Nazianze* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 142. See also 83–102.

[13] Anne Richard, *Cosmologie et théologie chez Grégoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2003), 273, 156–164, 213–217 and 233–237. Gregory refers to "worlds or a world" or "a world or worlds" in *Orations* 2.35 and 27.10. (*Oration* and *Epistle* refer to works of Gregory of Nazianzus unless otherwise indicated.)

[14] Richard, *Cosmologie*, 439.

[15] Richard, *Cosmologie*, 401–421.

approach to the knowledge of God. According to Lieggi, we can resolve an apparent contradiction in Gregory's thought between statements affirming and denying the possibility of knowing God if we assume that he was following a distinction Origen drew in *Contra Celsum* 6.42. There, in the context of a discussion of Plato, *Timaeus* 28c, Origen argues that human nature is not sufficient in itself (αὐταρκής) to seek and find God, but that, in so far as it is possible for a human being, or for a soul in a human body, to know God, it is only through the assistance of the God who is the object of the search.[16] Lieggi argues that for Gregory, as for Origen, the impossibility and the possibility of knowing God derive from the paradox of the mystery: "To know God is impossible to human reason with the means it has at its disposal, but it is still possible nonetheless, because God has chosen to make himself known by revealing himself."[17] Lieggi does not claim that the similarities between their approaches to the knowledge of God prove that Gregory was influenced by Origen although he clearly thinks it likely.

These works illustrate a consensus that Gregory knew and studied Origen and seriously engaged his thought, although he consistently thought through issues on his own. I propose that we look for Origen's influence, not so much in individual doctrines, as in a pervasive pattern of thought. With regard to the knowledge of God, this pattern of thought entails the gradual revelation of God to individuals and to the people of God as a whole, a revelation that is gradual because it is fundamentally pedagogical, one insight building upon another. Thus it is gradual and limited, not by some secretiveness of God's part, but by human limitations, limitations that, nonetheless, can be overcome to some extent through a gradual process of assimilation to the divine.

Recently Judith Kovacs, Robin Darling Young and I published a series of articles in which we identified a distinctive tradition in the understanding of οἰκονομία, the divine "plan." The term, of course, has its Christian origins in the New Testament and the further developed by Irenaeus to refer to the overall "plan" of salvation.[18] At least by

[16] Jean Paul Lieggi, "Influsse origeniani sulla teoria della conoscenza di Dio in Gregorio di Nazianzo" in *Origene e l'Alessandrinismo Cappadoce*, 217–242.

[17] Lieggi, "Influsse origeniani," 239, taking the term "paradox of the mystery" from Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la "connaissance mystique"* (Louvain: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961), 85–154.

[18] See John Reumann, "OIKONOMIA-terms in Paul in Comparison with Lucan *Heilsgeschichte*" *NTS* 13 (1966–1967): 147–167 and "Οἰκονομία as 'Ethical Accommoda-

Irenaeus' time, the concept had also gained associations from Greco-Roman rhetoric, where οἰκονομία is the "plan" or "arrangement" (Latin *dispositio*) that makes a discourse persuasive.[19] Such a plan entails being aware of the predispositions of the speaker's public and organizing the discourse in such a way as to prepare them to look favorably on the point the speaker intends to make. Christians believe that God, as the author of salvation, has, to a limited extent, revealed a cosmic plan of salvation to humanity. Paul was surprised to learn that this plan included the salvation of the Gentiles. In Irenaeus' theology, God gradually and skillfully prepares the human race to accept salvation in Christ. In Clement and the tradition we identified, we find that this cosmic plan operates as well on what we might call a microcosmic scale. Corresponding to the global *oikonomia*, there is an *oikonomia* for each individual rational being. We identified two distinctive features of this small-scale *oikonomia*:

> 1) the affirmation that the divine providence extends to each individual soul in such a way that there is a divine plan for that soul's salvation corresponding to God's plan for the salvation through *paideia* of the cosmos, and 2) the inspired Christian teacher is an active participant in that plan, exercising prerogatives that would otherwise be reserved to God, or to God's angels. The teacher is thus a steward (οἰκονόμος…) of the divine plan, the οἰκονομια, for that teacher's students, arranging the students' formation with a love, care and creativity otherwise characteristic of God.

We went on to say that:

> Such participation in the divine plan involves making certain that students encounter specific aspects of Christian teaching only when they are fully prepared for them. The teacher thus, like God, engages at times in concealment as well as in revelation. In this way participation in the divine plan is the basis for an esotericism all three authors advocate, an esotericism founded in the ultimate mystery of God.[20]

Since, for Clement, Origen and Evagrius, living out the Christian life and commending it to others is a human participation in God's

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tion' in the Fathers, and its Pagan Backgrounds" StPatr 3 (1961): 370–379. See also R.M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997), 46–53.

[19] See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric* (trans David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 209–214.

[20] Judith Kovacs, Joseph W. Trigg and Robin Darling Young, "Human Participation in God's Plan: the Legacy of Clement of Alexandria" *JECS* 9 (2001): 2.

oikonomia, the concept is fundamental to their piety as well as to their thought.[21]

Origen taught that we apprehend the macroscopic process of divine *oikonomia* in three stages. These are most fully and clearly articulated in the early chapters of Book One of Origen's *Commentary on John* that, in effect, constitute a preface to the whole commentary.[22] Stage One, in shadows and riddles, is the Old Testament. Stage Two, when Jesus' coming reveals the reality toward which those shadows and riddles point, is the New Testament. This makes the Old Testament accessible as gospel.[23] The Gospel of John, unlike the other three gospels, reveals Jesus' divinity "straightforwardly" (ἀκρᾰ́τως).[24] It thus approaches as closely as any sensible work can to a fundamentally spiritual reality by incarnating the Logos in human language. Nonetheless, a full apprehension of the Gospel requires stage three, the eschatological "eternal gospel" of Rev 14:6. This is fully apparent only when we see God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12).[25] Just as a select few at stage 1, Moses and the prophets, had access to the otherwise hidden coming of Jesus, so a select few at stage 2, the spiritual men, among whom Origen implicitly counts himself, have a measure of access to the eternal gospel.[26] Thus, short of the final consummation, the church's understanding of the gospel remains provisional and the inspired interpreter can obtain genuinely new insights. The spiritual person (the equivalent of Gregory's theologian) participates in the divine *oikonomia* and furthers it in the same way that the angels do.[27] This understanding of a three-stage

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[21] For Origen, see Hendrik S. Benjamins, *Eingeordnete Freiheit: Freiheit und Vorsehung bei Origenes* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

[22] See Rolf Gögler, *Zur Theologie des biblischen Wortes bei Origenes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1963), 381–289 and Joseph W. Trigg, "Origen and Cyril of Alexandria: Continuities and Discontinuities in their Approach to the *Gospel of John*" in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; Louvain: Peters, 2003), 955–965.

[23] Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.6.33–36.

[24] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.4.22.

[25] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.7.40. On the eternal gospel, see Einar Molland, *The Conception of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1938), 144–164.

[26] Origen also refers to the eternal gospel in *De principiis* 3.6.8. In that passage it is likewise presented as a third stage, beyond the existing Old, which prepares for the New, and the New itself, which prepares for it. In that passage Origen locates the eternal gospel in the eschatological horizon of the consummation and restitution of all things.

[27] See Joseph W. Trigg, "God's Marvelous *Oikonomia*" and "The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen's Thought" *JTS* n.s. 42 (1991):

apprehension also explains why Origen's allegorical interpretation does not simply show how the Old Testament foreshadows the new, but how the New Testament, even the Gospel of John, is a shadow of deeper realities. Origen argues that, in effect, the Gospel of John, which goes beyond the other three gospels in proclaiming Jesus' divinity, comes as close as any work can to expressing the fullness of the gospel in "the earthen treasures of ordinary speech" (ἐν τοῖς ὀστρακίνοις τῆς εὐτελοὺς λέξεως θησαύροις, see 2 Cor 4:7).[28]

Such an understanding undergirds the theological enterprise of *Peri Archon*, where the task of the theologian is to fill in the connections between the seemingly disparate items in the message of the Apostles proclaimed as the church's rule of faith. Origen implies that the Apostles had access to the higher stage of understanding but deliberately followed a policy of telling all believers very clearly those doctrines they thought they ought to believe while "reserving" (*relinquentes*) the reason for their assertions to be "sought" (*inquirendam*) by future believers who would have the charisms of "speech, wisdom and knowledge." He also states that there were other doctrines that the Apostles simply mentioned as being so. In these cases they "kept silent" (*siluerunt*) about the how and the why, leaving that for those in the future "who would be lovers of wisdom" and would undergo the discipline necessary to gain such wisdom.[29] Although some subtlety may have been lost in Rufinus' translation, Origen evidently states that the Apostles set forth some doctrines more clearly than others. In Origen's summary of the rule of faith, the doctrine of the Father and of the Son is set forth in detail and the doctrine of the Spirit is simply stated as so. This may imply that Origen considered the doctrine of the Spirit to be one of those doctrines where the Apostles deliberately left more for investigation.[30] Such doctrines are the "elementary and fundamental principles" that can then be connected together by those who follow the commandment, "Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge" (Hos 10:12) to constitute a "body of truth."[31] Thus, again, the teachings of the

35–51. The author of the *Address* claims that his own guardian angel brought him to Origen and left him in Origen's care (*Address* 5.72) and asks Origen, on departing from him, to pray that he may be given a new angelic guide (*Address* 19.206).

[28] *Comm. Jo.* 1.4.24.

[29] *Princ.* Preface, 3.

[30] *Princ.* Preface, 4.

[31] *Princ.* Preface, 10.

Apostles, as transmitted in the New Testament, provide access to a deeper teaching accessible to the trained and inspired theologian.

Gregory could have had access to this concept of human participation in the divine *oikonomia* through his study of Origen's works as well as through the *Address to Origen* composed by a student identified as Gregory Thaumaturgus.[32] It is also likely that he encountered them in a living tradition, since his fellow countryman and probable protégé, Evagrius Ponticus, also creatively adapted the concept.[33] His native Cappadocia had long-standing connections to Origen. Not only was Gregory Thaumaturgus thought to have been Origen's student, but so was one of Basil's predecessors as Bishop of Caesarea. According to Eusebius, during the reign of Alexander Severus (222–235), Bishop Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea summoned Origen there so that he might do something useful for his churches and Firmilian himself went to Judea to study with Origen.[34] Before going to Athens, where he and Basil studied together, Gregory visited the two principal centers of Origenism. He went to Palestinian Caesarea, where he would have had access to Origen's library.[35] He also went to Alexandria, where he could have encountered that tradition in a fourth-century follower of Origen, Didymus the Blind.[36] For Didymus, as for Origen, *oikonomia* is not just God's cosmic plan of salvation, but God's particular plan for individual human beings like Job or the poor man mentioned in Ps. 9:35b (LXX) "The poor man has been abandoned to your care, you are the helper of orphans":

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[32] Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.30) identified Origen's student as the Gregory who subsequently became a Bishop of Neocaesarea and Gregory of Nyssa's oration on Gregory Thaumaturgus accepted that identification without question. See Joseph W. Trigg, "God's Marvelous *Oikonomia*," 27–52.

[33] See Robin Darling Young, "Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the *Gnostikos*," *JECS* 9 (2001): 53–70. Evagrius may be the young man of the same name Gregory mentions as a student in Epistle 3. In the epilogue to the *Praktikos*, Evagrius, echoing 1 Cor 3:6, speaks of "the righteous Gregory" as "the one who planted me" and in *Gnostikos* 44, he writes of having learned about contemplation from the same person.

[34] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.27.

[35] See Gregory, *Oration* 7.6. Paul Gallay considers Caesarea the most likely place where Gregory encountered Origen's thought. (*La vie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* [Paris: Emmanuel Vite, 1943], 32–35).

[36] See Wolfgang Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandrien: Zur Frage des Origenismus im 3. Jahrhundert* (PTS 21; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978) and Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

> The poor man has accordingly been abandoned to your care, you will make plans (οἰκόνομήσαι) concerning his salvation, so that, providing good things from heaven, you may make him a rich man. And he helps the orphan in this way, establishing and nurturing him into the rank of a son. In these ways he must remove the orphan who once had the devil as his father because of sin, but now has abandoned him by means of repentance.[37]

Didymus also believed that human beings participate in the divine plan, sometimes in ways that are deliberately deceptive, as Abraham did when he lied to the Pharaoh about Sarah (Gen 12:10–20) and as Rahab did when she hid the Hebrew spies in Jericho (Josh 2:3–5).[38] Didymus was also, of course, an enthusiastic promoter of a Nicene theology that not only upheld the *homoousion* of the Father and the Son, but extended it to the Holy Spirit.[39]

Gregory of Nazianzus' understanding of *oikonomia* belongs in this tradition. Like others among the Fathers, including Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory applies the term *oikonomia* in its cosmic sense to the whole scope of divine dealings with the created order.[40] He writes of the *oikonomia* of the stars and warns his hearers to avoid undue curiosity about the first nature or the final *oikonomia*.[41] *Oikonomia*, in this macrcosmic sense, most often refers to God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a plan that includes his incarnation, his baptism, and his crucifixion and resurrection.[42] This plan was hidden in the counsel of God, but the angels have been initiated into it.[43] A consciousness of microcosmic *oikonomia* also pervades Gregory's writings and, as in Origen, it informs his piety as well as his thought. His letters and orations often refer to God's "planning" (οἰκονομῶν). Accepting them as part of God's plan, and thus ultimately intended for his benefit, gives him a measure of

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[37] Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Job (1–4)* codex p. 71 and 77, *Commentarii in Job* (1–4), *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob*, pt. 1 (ed. A. Henrichs; Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 1; Bonn: Habelt, 1968), 24–308. (Pap: 19,583: Exeget.) and Didymus, *Fragmenta in Psalmos (e commentario altero)*, in *Psalmenkommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung* 1:121–375; 2:3–367 (ed. Ekkehard Mühlenberg; PTS 15 & 16; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1:1975; 2:1977), fr. 69, ll. 7–11.

[38] Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Genesis* 226.24–227.29 and *Commentary on the Psalms* Fr. 26.

[39] See Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit* 146.

[40] Reinhard Jacob Kees, *Der Lehre von* Oikonomia *Gottes in der* Oratio Catechetica *Gregors von Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[41] See *Epistle* 101.59 and *Oration* 32.25.

[42] See *Epistle* 202.10 and *Orations* 2.24, 39.14 and 41.11.

[43] *Oration* 38.14.

consolation for his grief at the death of his younger brother Caesarius and his disappointment at his expulsion from Constantinople.[44] Such an understanding of *oikonomia* informs his letter to his friend, Sacerdos, a priest who had been relieved of his responsibilities after falling into disgrace with Helladius, Basil's successor as Bishop of Caesarea. Gregory states that he will intercede with Helladius to effect a reconciliation, but, in the meantime, counsels Sacerdos that he should ascribe his misfortunes to God's plan and take them as an occasion for developing a more godly character. He asks Homophronius, a priest in Sacerdos' monastery, to convey this message:

> I know this and am convinced of it, and so I say it confidently: if any affliction now comes upon us, the lamp of Israel will not be quenched, even if it flickers in the breath of the evil one, nor will God's kindness be hidden for long—that kindness that he hides from those who fear him for the unspeakable reasons of a plan—but it will be all the more glorified and admired on account of your endurance and of your hope that will not disappoint. Use this to exhort our most honorable son Sacerdos not to lose heart and not indulge in sentiments that are beneath his dignity, but to make good use of his time, taking his misfortunes and turning them into material for philosophy.[45]

Using an image probably taken from Origen, he refers to such experiences of adversity as feeling the left, as opposed to the right, hand of God.[46]

Human beings also participate in God's *oikonomia*. Gregory makes this point in his "stewardship sermon," *Oration* 14, when he encourages the rich to imitate God, who lavishes blessings on all, by giving to the poor.[47] Elsewhere he exhorts the rich to plan their affairs as if they were doing so on behalf of someone else.[48] The same principle applies to the stewardship of souls. A good pastor like Basil the Great exercises *oikonomia* by treating people appropriately, according to their needs.[49] Pas-

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[44] See *Epistles* 222.6 and 238.1 (consolation to the bereaved), *Oration* 7.24 on the death of Caesarius and *Oration* 42.27, where Gregory speaks of his leaving the see of Constantinople as "being managed otherwise."

[45] Gregory Nazianzus, *Epistle* 221.2–3. See also *Epistle* 113.

[46] Gregory Nazianzus, *Epistle* 215.1–2 and *Oration* 7.24. See Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah* 12.2 and *Commentary on Ephesians*, fragment on 12.2.

[47] *Oration* 14.25. Bernard Coulie's otherwise excellent study, *Les richesses dans l'œuvre de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Étude littéraire et historique* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1985), does not deal with Origen's contribution to Gregory's thought in this regard.

[48] See *Oration* 26.11. See also *Oration* 40.18.

[49] See *Oration* 43.40.

tors, in particular, must heed Paul's words to "consider themselves stewards (οἰκονόμους) of God's mysteries" (1 Cor 4:1–2) or, in terms Gregory applies to himself, "stewards of souls" (οἰκονόμοι τῶν ψυχῶν).[50] This usage emphasizes that the pastor, as an administrator of the divine plan, is, strictly speaking, a "steward" in the sense of one who manages on behalf of the true owner and is accountable to that owner. Gregory justifies his flight from Nazianzus after being ordained a presbyter as the consequence of an understandable—perhaps even laudable—hesitancy to accept the responsibility for directing other human beings, the "art of arts" (τεχνή τεχνῶν) and "science of sciences" (ἐπιστημή ἐπιστημῶν).[51] Gregory praises Athanasius for exercising an appropriate *oikonomia* of souls by distinguishing genuine differences concerning the relationship between the persons of the Trinity from apparent differences that were merely terminological.[52]

As with Clement, Origen and Evagrius, *oikonomia* may entail withholding information. Gregory must do more than simply keep his own thinking straight, so that that he can help others on the way to perfection grow in Christ, he must also know when *not* to speak about deep subjects: "to me then this seems a matter of no mean importance and requiring no small assistance of the Spirit, to give to each at the appropriate time an appropriate helping of the word, and to economize judiciously the truth of our doctrines."[53] Appealing, as Origen did, to the distinction between "milk" and "solid food" in 1 Cor 3 and Heb 5 and using much the same terminology, he says that Paul's "milk" is "simpler and more elementary teaching." This is appropriate for children and neophytes, but, those who are more mature require more advanced teaching if they are to flourish.[54] Like Origen, from whom he may have learned of it, he approved the Jewish custom of withholding certain passages of Scripture from the simple.[55] Like Origen, Gregory sees the Apostle Paul as a preeminent paradigm of the οἰκονόμος, particularly in his "economical" circumcision of Timothy. As Paul circumcised Timothy, even though his principles did not demand such an action, we often

[50] See *Oration* 40.44. See also *Orations* 21.35 and 42.13, 24. Gregory refers to pastors as "stewards of the mysteries" in *Oration* 39.14.
[51] *Oration* 2.16.
[52] *Oration* 21.35.
[53] *Oration* 2.35.
[54] *Oration* 2.45.
[55] *Orations* 2.48, 32.32. See Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Prologue 7.

do well to "economize the truth."[56] Discretion may be in order because those who lack preparation simply cannot understand advanced teaching and will either be baffled or draw misleading inferences from it. It may also be advisable because certain hearers will find the content of that teaching doctrinally objectionable and may have the political connections to make those objections stick. Upholding the *homoousion* of the Son with the Father was dicey enough for an eastern bishop during the reign of Valens (364–378) without publicly proclaiming that the divinity of the Spirit as well. In a letter written, most likely, in 372 or 373, Gregory commends Basil for deliberately refraining from calling the Spirit "God" in order to maintain his influential position as Bishop of Caesarea.[57] (Whether or not Gregory understood Basil's position is an open question).[58]

Gregory's experience in the struggle over the reception of Nicea, however, makes him more aware than Origen of the potential abuse of *oikonomia.* He does not condone lying and sees a danger of making *oikonomia* a pretext for cowardice. In his panegyric of Athanasius, Gregory speaks of three groups among those in the East who upheld the Nicene faith. One group professed to have kept the faith privately. Such faith Gregory compares to a fetus stillborn in the womb. Others join intermittently with those who are more ardent in their orthodoxy like sparks that briefly flare into light. "But some" in a third group:

> speak the truth openly, of whom I would be a part; I dare boast of nothing more—no longer exercising reserve out of cowardice (μηκέτι τὴν ἐμὴν δειλίαν οἰκονόμων) like the thought of those who are unsound—for

[56] See *Orations* 2.52 and 31.25. On "economizing the truth" see *Epistle* 58.11–14. Origen discusses the circumcision of Timothy as an instance of *oikonomia* in *Comm. Jo.* 1.7.41 and 13.18.111; he refers to it as an example of Paul's becoming a Jew in order to gain Jews (1 Cor 9:20) in *Comm. Jo.* 10.7.30, *Commentary on Matthew* 11.18, and *Commentary on Romans* Catena fr. 10. See Francesca Cocchini, *Il Paolo de Origene: Contributo all storia della recezione delle epistole paoline nel III secolo* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1992), 59–65.

[57] *Epistle* 58.11–14. See also Basil, *Epistles* 113 and 114, probably written around the same time, in which he advises presbyters in Tarsus not to demand anything beyond faith in the Holy Spirit as expressed at Nicea except that the Spirit should not be called a creature.

[58] Basil contented himself with arguing that the Spirit is no more than "same in honor" [ὁμότιμον] with the Father and the Son. Benoît Pruche, in his introduction to the Sources Chrétiennes edition of Basil's *On the Holy Spirit*, accepts Gregory's view that Basil was "economizing," but for different reasons than Gregory allows. See SC 17bis:79–110. See also McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 374 and Hanson, *Search*, 776–777. In speaking of the Father and the Son, Basil, in his *Epistle* 52.2 equates "same in substance" with "same in honor."

> we have exercised reserve (ᾠκονομήνσαμεν) too long, not gaining others to our side and losing some of our own, which is just the characteristic of bad stewards (ὁ κακῶν ὄντως ἐστὶν οἰκονόμων)—but bringing the child into the light, nurturing it zealously and presenting it in the sight of all, ever more perfect.[59]

Taking leave of Constantinople, Gregory says that, while he can understand the motivations of those who, like Basil, in his opinion, employ *oikonomia* to keep deeper doctrines partially hidden, he would rather be counted with those who have the boldness to confess their piety openly. He compares those who sometimes remain silent about their beliefs to geysers:

> For just as in the case of underground waters, some are entirely hidden in the depths; some boil as they are confined and give promise of an eruption to those who listen to them, but do so in their own good time; and some burst forth. So among those who philosophize about God, omitting those who have no good judgment at all, some keep their piety completely hidden and unnoticed in themselves. There are also some who are close to giving it birth, so that they avoid impiety, but do not candidly express the pious position, either because they are employing a certain plan (οἰκονομίᾳ τινὶ χρώμενοι) in their discourse or because they shirk out of cowardice, the result being that, while their own views are sound, they do not, so to speak, make the people sound, as if they were responsible for looking after themselves but not for others. Yet others make the treasure public, not concealing the birth of piety or thinking that they can be saved in isolation, without letting this benefit overflow to others. I would like to be counted among this third group, along with those who share my good boldness in boldly confessing piety.[60]

Speaking the truth with such boldness is incumbent, not upon everyone, but upon the pastor and theologian, and upon that person only when it is appropriate. In Oration 32, which seems to have been given shortly after his arrival in Constantinople in 379, Gregory commends his congregation's warmth in defense of Nicene doctrine but cautions that one must speak the hidden wisdom spoken among the perfect of 1 Cor 2:6–7 only at an appropriate time (ὅταν καιρὸν λάβῃς) and only if one has actually been entrusted with it.[61]

The *Theological Orations* show a number of affinities to Origen's thought, especially as set forth in Book 1 of his *Commentary on John*. One such affinity is a common tendency to analyze and categorize the

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[59] *Oration* 21.34.
[60] *Oration* 42.14–15. See also *Oration* 21.34.
[61] *Oration* 32.13.

titles of Christ. In his discussion of the meaning of gospel in what is in effect the preface to that work, Origen notes that Isaiah 52:7, which Paul applies to the preaching of Christ (Rom 10:15), speaks of those who bring good news of "good things" (ἀγαθά) in the plural. This is anomalous, he observes, because what is preached is the good news of "one thing," Jesus Christ. Origen resolves this by arguing that, in fact, Jesus encompasses "many good things" as detailed in the various titles applied to him in the Bible.[62] The enumeration, discussion and classification of these titles is the topic of the actual commentary in Book 1. There the fundamental distinction is between those titles that the Son has because of the needs of fallen creatures, and those few titles—Wisdom, Word, Life and Truth—that pertained to him "in the beginning" before they fell.[63] There, as elsewhere in his works, Origen distinguishes two ways of knowing and proclaiming Christ: the "bodily gospel" that knows nothing, among those who are carnal, "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" and the participation of those who are spiritual in the "Logos who has come back after being made flesh to what 'he was in the beginning with God'" (John 1:2). He finds biblical sanction for this contrast in the distinction Paul makes between 1 Cor 2:2—"I determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified"—and the "hidden wisdom" Paul professed to speak "among the perfect" in 1 Cor 2:6–8.[64] Because the needs of rational creatures are different, Christ becomes "many things" and, indeed "all things" in a more divine way than his imitator Paul, who became "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22).[65] The titles thus represent various ways that Christ mediates redemption through a progressive series of stages that ultimately culminate in knowledge of God. Thus the Logos is "shepherd" for those who are "tame and gentle even if incapable of rational thought"—but "king" for those who are capable of receiving him more rationally—and "way" for those who walk in wisdom.[66] Origen's use of these titles is, among other things, a way of reappropriating them from Valentinus for the use of a theology consistent with the church's rule of faith.[67] Marguerite Harl observes that

[62] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.9.52.
[63] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.20.123.
[64] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.7.43.
[65] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.20.120 and *Comm. Jo.* 1.31.217–219. See also *Comm. Jo.* 20.319.
[66] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1. 28.190; 1.28.200; and 1.27.183–185.
[67] Although I believe that he does not do justice to the union between the divine Logos and his human soul in Origen's thought, I agree with Holger Strutwolf that

the conceptual basis of Origen's categorization of titles is often obscure and does not necessarily involve incarnation.[68] This may be, in part, because the incarnation, the Word's assumption of human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is the culmination of a redemptive process that begins, for Origen, in the union between the Logos and the unfallen rational creature that ultimately joins with flesh and constitutes Christ's human soul.[69]

While Origen may have been led to discuss the titles of Christ in order to differentiate his thought from Valentinianism, Gregory's principal concern is to discredit Arian claims that Christ is a created being inferior to God the Father. The Arian controversy raises the question of how to deal with those titles and attributes that seem to imply an inferior status. The answer, following Origen, is to take these as involving Christ's self-emptying as part of the *oikonomia* of God. In Gregory's very categorization of titles there may also be a reminiscence of Origen. In *Oration* 29 he states that we comprehend the Son's divinity "from the great and lofty phrases" (ἐκ μεγάλων καὶ ὑψηλῶν τῶν φωνῶν) applied to him. These include "God," "word," "the one in the beginning," "the one with the beginning," "the beginning," "only-begotten Son," "way," "truth," "life," "light," "wisdom," "power," "effulgence," "impress," "image," "seal," "Lord," "king," "the one who is," and "Almighty."[70] To these he opposes such expressions as "my God and your God," "greater," and "created."[71] In *Oration* 30 he makes another distinction; he divides the titles of God between those that refer to his being (οὐσία) and those that refer to his authority (ἐξουσία), what God is in himself versus what God is in relation to creation.[72] This is a distinction not unlike the one Origen makes between those titles that pertain to the Son "in the beginning" and those that denote the ways that the Son condescends to the needs of fallen rational creatures. Gregory proceeds to discuss the titles of the Son that imply that the Son is of the same being as the Father. These include "Son," "only begotten," "Word,"

Origen adapts Valentinus' ideas. See *Gnosis als System: Zur reception der valentinischen Gnosis bei Origenes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 270–307.

[68] Marguerite Harl, *La fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Seuil, 1958), 121–137. Origen's discussion of the titles in *Peri Archon* 1.2.4 centers on whether they do or do not imply corporeality; this is not the same as the distinction in *Comm. Jo.* 1.

[69] See Origen, *Princ.* 2.6.3.

[70] *Oration* 29.17.

[71] *Oration* 29.18.

[72] *Oration* 30.18–19.

"wisdom," "power," "truth," "seal," "impress," "image," "light," "life," "righteousness," "sanctification," "redemption" and "resurrection."[73] A second set of titles, Gregory goes on to say, do not express the Son's common being with the Father but are "peculiarly ours, and belong to what was assumed from that source (τῆς ἐντεῦθεν προσλήψεως)." These include "man," "son of man," "anointed/Christ," "way," "door," "shepherd," "sheep," "lamb," "high priest," "Melchizedek," "king of Salem," and "king of righteousness."[74]This is similar to the distinction made in the previous oration, but Gregory includes in his own second category titles like "way," "door," and even "shepherd," that make more sense in Origen's schema, where the *oikonomia* is not confined to the Incarnation but includes the entire activity of the Son in relation to fallen rational creatures.

In Book One of his *Commentary on John* Origen describes the person qualified to interpret that Gospel as someone who is, like John himself, another Jesus and capable of understanding the Son of God without intermediaries.[75] This person is a priest, one who devotes all activity to God.[76] In terms of the titles discussed above, that person is someone who needs the Son in those aspects expressed in the higher set of titles, not those denoting aspects that the Son assumed for the sake of the divine *oikonomia*.[77] In terms of the stages of revelation discussed below, that person is one of the select few who have access to the eternal gospel. For Origen that person is also someone who, as we have seen, participates in the divine *oikonomia*, knowing when and when not to say things about God. In the very act of interpreting the Gospel of John, Origen stakes his claim to be such a person, and his own followers certainly believed that he was.[78] Origen's priest is the theologian of Gregory's first and second *Theological Orations*. Gregory implicitly complains that Eunomius and his followers do not properly exercise *oikonomia*, but speak impetuously. They do not know when to theologize, about what and to whom. Even more seriously, they do not know that not just anyone can speak about God, but only someone with specific qualifica-

[73] *Oration* 30.20.
[74] *Oration* 30.21.
[75] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.4.23 and 1.8.64.
[76] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.2.9–10.
[77] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.20.124.
[78] See Joseph W. Trigg, "God's Marvelous *Oikonomia*," and "The Angel of Great Counsel," 35–51.

tions, qualifications they manifestly lack. Such a person must be pure, or at least in the process of being purified and must not be a mere dilettante, but someone, like Origen's priest, fully devoted to the investigation of divine things.[79] Furthermore, the genuine theologian, honoring the divine mystery, will refrain from speaking about God among those who seek nothing higher than the satisfaction of their passions.[80]

Gregory implicitly claims to be a theologian himself and, as he makes Moses the image of a theologian,[81] he boldly recounts the ascent of Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 in the first person—"to me as I am eagerly ascending the mountain … so that I might come to be in the cloud and come to be with God"—implying that his conduct as a theologian is, in a mystical way, the same as Moses'.[82] On Mount Sinai God not only reveals himself to Moses, but in varying degrees forbids such direct access to himself from the rest of the people of Israel, even Moses' brother Aaron, and from animals. Gregory's point is that no one but the true theologian can ascend to God's presence—all others must keep their distance—and even that person can have only a limited comprehension of God. In the event the true theologian sees God, that person, like Moses, sees only the back parts of God, the Word made flesh for us. Even a being far higher in nature than we are would still be much farther from comprehending God than any degree of exaltation above us.[83] Gregory's claim that he himself exercises *oikonomia* as a theologian by virtue of a privileged relationship to God corresponds to a similar claim by Origen. Origen implicitly made this claim when he undertook his interpretation of the Gospel of John after stating that no one could understand the Gospel of John unless that person became another Jesus by virtue of Christ's indwelling and had the mind of Christ.[84] Origen, like Gregory, posited high spiritual qualifications for himself, but was modest about the extent to which he could understand God. Origen points out in his *Commentary on John* that Jesus gave his disciples the command: "Let your light so shine before men" (Matt 5:16). He did not command them to let their light shine before God.

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[79] *Oration* 27.2–3.

[80] *Oration* 27.5–6.

[81] On the figure of Moses, see Andrea Sterk, "On Basil, Moses and the Model Bishop," *CH* 67 (1998): 227–253.

[82] *Oration* 28.2–3.

[83] *Oration* 28.3.

[84] See Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.3.23–24.

That would be like a star to shine before the sun, when all the stars together are dim before the sun.[85]

Like Origen, Gregory makes it clear that full understanding is possible, even for the most advanced, because of the unavoidable conditions of our fleshly embodiment. As in Origen, these limitations also apply to human language, which cannot ever fully transcend its association with sensible reality. Marguerite Harl beautifully summarizes this aspect of Origen's thought:

> When Jesus thought or acted, his words and his acts came in the covering of signs. His revelation is necessarily veiled by the very fact that it took place in the world of matter. Origen actually understood the material and historical world as a vast and diverse image of the truth, which it simultaneously veils and reveals.[86]

We see this outlook in Book 1 of the *Commentary on John*, where Origen states:

> Indeed, considering the most important and most divine of the mysteries of God, there are some that Scripture does not contain and some that human speech, following the conventional meaning of words, or human language cannot contain, "For there are many other things which Jesus did, which, if I were to write them one by one, I do not think that the world itself could contain (or "receive" χωρῆσαι) the books written" (John 21:25)[87]

Drawing on Psalm 18.11, "He makes darkness his hiding place," Gregory explains to a fuller extent than Origen why human language is so limited. He identifies the darkness as "our thickness" or "density" (παχύτης), through which few can see even a little. God has established our density (τὴν ἡμετέραν παχύτητα) as a corporeal fog (σωματικὸς γνόφος) between us and God. We cannot deal with concepts without bodily images in language any more than we can step over our own shadow.[88] For Gregory "density" is the predominant characteristic of

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[85] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.17.121–122. See also J.W. Trigg "Origen's Modesty," StPatr 21 (1989): 349–355.

[86] Marguerite Harl, *La fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Seuil, 1958), 141: "Quand Jésus a parlé ou agi, ses paroles et ses actes sont entrés dans le revêtement de signes. Sa révélation est obligatoirement voilée de seul fait qu'elle a eu lieu dans le monde de la matière. Origène conçoit, en effet, le monde matériel et historique comme une vaste et multiple image de la vérité, qu'elle voile et qu'elle révèle à la fois."

[87] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.5.27.

[88] *Oration* 28.12. See also 29.11.

the human condition, so much so that the "density" (παχύτης) that the Son assumed is virtually a synonym for incarnation.[89] Gregory shared this usage with Basil, who used the Son's assumption of human "density" as an explanation for those passages that implied limitations in Jesus' own knowledge.[90] Origen had also spoken of the soul's being "made dense" by the body and of divinization as a process of the becoming more "thin" or "subtle" (λεπτός).[91] Origen taught that prayer thinned out "density of heart," a phrase he took from Isaiah 6:10: "The heart of this people has been made dense (ἐπαχύνθη)."[92] According to Gregory, such limitations, inherent in the human condition, explain why even the great visionaries of the Bible could not perceive the nature (φύσις) and being (οὐσία) of God.[93] In his discussion of at least two of those visionaries, Isaiah and Paul, Gregory echoes Origen. As in Origen, the Lord of Hosts is "hidden" (ἀποκρυπτόμενον) by the Seraphim of Isaiah 6, who figuratively veil God's head and feet, not their own.[94] As Origen does many times, Gregory uses Paul's claim that we now know only "in part" (1 Cor 13:9, 12) to verify that a full knowledge of God is only possible in an eschatological horizon.[95] Thus anyone who may be said to know God only does so relatively to another person less fully enlightened.[96] In his *Commentary on John* Origen makes much the same points. In his comments on John 4:21 and 23 he states that human life is, at best, a process of perfection and in his comments on John 13:6–11, he states that the disciples at the last supper were, with the exception of Judas, clean by human standards, but no one is clean enough for God.[97] This perfection for Origen applies in particular to our understanding of God as mediated by the "utterances" (ῥήματα) of God:

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89 See *Oration* 29.19, 38.2, and 40.45 and *Epistle* 101.49.

90 See Basil, *Epistles* 8.7 and 262.2.

91 See Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.21.129 and *Homilies on Leviticus* 9.8.

92 See Origen *Homilies on Jer.*18.10 and *Homilies on Isaiah* 6.5.

93 *Oration* 28.19.

94 *Oration* 28.19. For Paul, see also *Oration* 32.15. In Origen's interpretation of Isaiah 6 in *Princ.* 4.3.14 the feet and head that the Seraphim cover are not their own but the Lord's, illustrating the limitations of human knowledge of God.

95 *Oration* 28.20. Origen uses 1 Cor 13:9 and 12 this way in *Comm. Jo.* 10.43.304–305, 13.10.58, 220.34.306–307 and fr. 10, and *Homilies on Jeremiah.* 8.27, *Homily 5 on 1 Sam.* 9, and *Commentary on Ephesians.* frs. 5, 17.

96 *Oration* 28.17.

97 Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.14.87 and 32.7.74.

> Taking the power to become children of God, let us do everything that we can to become "of God" and hear his utterances, and let us progress (προκοπτῶμεν) in the state of being "of God" so that we may progress also in hearing the utterances of God, always clearing up more of them, until we receive (χωρήσωμεν) all the utterances of God, or as many as it is possible for those who have deserved the spirit of adoption to receive, both now and later.[98]

These "utterances" are not only those that are written but those that are unwritten and ineffable, since the world cannot contain/receive all the books written about Jesus.[99] Gregory also puts all creaturely apprehension of God on such a continuum. Just as Moses, in seeing God, only sees the back parts of God's glory, even the archangels are farther from fully comprehending God than we are from them.[100] This respect for creaturely limitations short of their eschatological fulfillment rules out Eunomius' claim to make absolute statements about God's being. Gregory's appeal to the unsearchable darkness of God beyond the continuum of understanding possible, especially in our present, densely embodied state, saves his argument from mere obscurantism and makes Eunomius' appeal to logical consistency seem shallow by comparison.

A more profound use of Origen's view of the divine *oikonomia* as a continuing process of spiritual transformation comes in *Oration* 31. There Gregory openly confronts and honestly admits the most telling objection that his opponents bring to bear: the divinity of the Spirit is "unwritten" (ἄγραφον), that is, nowhere explicitly stated in Scripture.[101] At the same time, again listing titles, he argues that the Scripture does implicitly suggest the Spirit's divinity.[102] To account for this anomaly, Gregory turned to Origen's view that the Bible is just the starting point for a divine revelation that all the books in the world could not contain, and to Origen's understanding of *oikonomia* as a process in which information is deliberately reserved until the learner is ready for it. This progressive continuum, which we observe in every individual apprehension of God, also occurs on a larger scale in the overall apprehension of God by the people of God: the apprehension of the Spirit which occurs

98 Origen *Comm. Jo.* 20.24.308.
99 Origen *Comm. Jo.* 20.24.304.
100 *Oration* 28.3.
101 *Oration* 31.1. See also 31.21 and 31.29.
102 *Oration* 31.29.

"by advances and progresses (προόδοις καὶ προκοπαῖς) from glory to glory" (see 2 Cor 3:18).[103] Thus, echoing 1 Cor 13, "enlightenments illuminate us gradually" (κατᾶ μέρος).[104] In this process:

> The old scripture proclaimed the Father openly and the Son more obscurely. The new scripture is open about the Son and hints at the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit associates with us and affords us a clearer manifestation of himself.[105]

As with Origen, there is no need for Scripture, by itself, to contain all God's utterances; there are three stages, the old scripture, the new scripture and a third stage characterized by the presence of the Spirit. Gregory calls the transitions between these stages "obvious changes of life" or "earthquakes."[106] Gregory's theology thus makes possible the recognition of real change in doctrine. Although Gregory does not say so, the logic of *Oration* 28 suggests that this third stage is still incomplete, awaiting its fulfillment on a eschatological horizon. These three stages are a matter of *oikonomia* in the sense of something that could only be shared partially as people are ready for it. It was not safe to proclaim the Son until the Father was clearly acknowledged, because it would confuse the issue of monotheism. Likewise it was not safe to proclaim the Spirit openly until the Son was acknowledged. Otherwise believers would be sickened by taking nourishment they are not yet capable of digesting (a Pauline image from 1 Cor 2) or their eyes would be not be ready for sunlight.[107]

Thus, long before Schleiermacher or Newman, Gregory argues for progressive change, if not organic development in the 19th-century sense, in the church's doctrine. This contrasts favorably with the best way Gregory's colleague Basil could explain the admitted lack of scriptural evidence for the divinity of the Spirit. Basil's explanation for that silence also appeals to *oikonomia*, although he does not use the word in that context. He argued that, like many liturgical customs, the doctrine of the Spirit was an apostolic tradition the biblical authors themselves kept secret "for the benefit of readers" (πρὸς τὸ τῶν ἐντυγχάνοντων λυσιτελές); there was no real change or progress in the understanding of God, only the open expression of a doctrine held from

[103] *Oration* 31.26.
[104] *Oration* 31.27.
[105] *Oration* 31.26.
[106] *Oration* 31.25.
[107] *Oration* 31.25.

the beginning.[108] For Gregory, by contrast, as for Origen, the church's understanding of God is not something perfect and static, given for all time, but a dynamic process by no means complete. This possibility alarmed A.J. Mason, the 19th-century editor of the *Theological Orations* who warned, in a note to *Oration* 31, that, "It does not follow that [Gregory] thought doctrinal advance possible in other directions also."[109] Although Gregory experienced the Council of Constantinople in 381 as a humiliating defeat, it turned out, thanks to *Oration* 31, to have been a triumph. Whatever the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed actually says, the church effectively received the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the sense that Gregory's revered oration presented it. We can ascribe some of that success to the consummate artistry of "the Christian Demosthenes." Ultimately, though, the *Theological Orations* are persuasive because in them Gregory himself exercised *oikonomia* in more than a rhetorical sense: he invites us into a dynamic process of spiritual transformation in which, little by little, we begin to perceive the ultimate mystery of God. In doing so he carries on and receives into the Christian tradition the heritage of Origen. Origen's heritage is not just this vision of continual change or the concept of human participation in the divine *oikonomia*, it is an open-ended way of thinking, a process of continual questioning and rational debate. Origen could thus have a profound effect on Gregory of Nazianzus even as Gregory differentiated himself from Origen's cosmology. Origen's concern with the student who wrote the *Address* was not to have him parrot his teacher, but to have him think for himself. That is why he deliberately hid his own views at times. The purpose of a teacher is to make another teacher like himself. The degree to which Gregory of Nazianzus thinks through issues on his own hides to some extent his reliance on Origen, even as it reveals Origen's still vital heritage to Christian thought.

[108] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66. R.P.C. Hanson (*Search*, 782–783) makes this point.

[109] Arthur James Mason, *Five Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 178 n. 6.

GOD AND METHODIUS: USE OF, AND BACKGROUND TO, THE TERM ΑΠΡΟΣΔΕΗΣ AS A DESCRIPTION OF GOD IN THE WORKS OF METHODIUS OF OLYMPUS

Katharina Bracht*

In his definitive monograph *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ*,[1] Lloyd George Patterson crowned an interest that had continued from his dissertation onwards and in many subsequent published essays.[2] That book devoted two chapters to the topic of God and Methodius in which he first describes Methodius' remarks on the divine nature,[3] and then considers the question of possible sources.[4] Nonetheless he planned to pursue the topic beyond this study in order to investigate whether it holds a particular explanation for Methodius' use of the term ἀπροσδεής (self-sufficient) as a description of God. In one of his last letters to me he wrote, "I do wish you would send me any uses of ἀπροσδεής you run across among Christian or philosophical sources likely known to Methodius."[5] I would like to propose an answer here that is based upon all references in the works of those ancients, both Christian and pagan, either proven to have been known to Methodius or possibly known to him.[6]

The term ἀπροσδεής appears in Methodius' work *De Creatis* with marked frequency; there are seven occurrences, of which five are in

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[1] Lloyd George Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

[2] Lloyd George Patterson, "The Anti-Origenist Theology of Methodius of Olympus," (Ph.D. diss., University of New York, 1958).

[3] Patterson, *Methodius*, 220–222.

[4] Patterson, *Methodius*, 223–227.

[5] Letter to the author of 2 July, 1998.

[6] An answer, then, dealing specifically with the use of the term ἀπροσδεής, and not with the full range of associated ideas, which were also indicated in ancient literature by the use of other terms. The wider semantic field to which the term ἀπροσδεής belongs when referring to God in the context of a certain author's works should nonetheless be named where possible.

Creat. 3 alone.[7] It is always employed as a description of the self-sufficiency of God. From here it is only a small step to joining Patterson in asking the reason for these findings and their significance. Is the term simply part of the common usage of the day, or is Methodius adopting the usage of a particular group with which he felt affiliated?

I shall first take stock of the occurrences of ἀπροσδεής in the works of Methodius and formulate the problem at hand (I). Then I shall deal with the background to Methodius' use of the term ἀπροσδεής, investigating first its appearances in connection with God in the works of those ancients known or possibly known to Methodius (II),[8] then its application with regard to that which God created or that which issued from him (III).[9] The results will be evaluated in the fourth section (IV).

1. *The Texts and the Problem*

Fragments II–VII of the work *De Creatis*, which has been handed down to us only in excerpts contained within Photius' *Bibliotheca*,[10] reveal an argument followed by Methodius against Origen and his followers. Methodius ascribes to Origen the assertion, "that the universe is coeternal with the only wise and self-sufficient God (συναίδιον εἶναι τῷ μόνῳ σοφῷ καὶ ἀπροσδεεῖ θεῷ)" (*Creat.* 2.1). This assertion is substantiated by the opposing side on the grounds that God the creator can no more exist without the universe that he created than a master craftsman can without his artifacts. For it is implicit that at a point in time when God has not yet been active as creator, that is, before the universe was created, God is not to be seen as creator.

In his refutation, Methodius demonstrates that God (even as God the creator) is already perfect before the creation of the world, because he is self-sufficient and needs nothing more to be perfect, not even the act of creation. He begins with a comprehensive definition of the term τέλειος, which he expounds for the moment in general terms without giving any specific reference. The term ἀπροσδεής plays a key role here, as it is applied almost synonymously with τέλειος, "Does perfect

[7] *Creat.* 2.1; 3.1.2–5; 7.5; G. Nathanael Bonwetsch, *Methodius* (GCS 27; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1917). Patterson inexplicably counts sixteen occurrences; *Methodius*, 223.

[8] Namely Plato, Plutarch, the First Epistle of Clement, Alcinous, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, the *Kerygmata Petrou*, Origen, Plotinus and Porphyry.

[9] References made by Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria and Plotinus are investigated here.

[10] Photius, *Bibliothecae codices* 235, 301b–304b; PG 39.

(τέλειος) not mean precisely existent by virtue of oneself (διὰ ἑαυτόν) and self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεής)?" (3.1). Expressed negatively that means, "that that which is neither itself by virtue of itself (αὐτὸ δι' ἑαυτό) nor is itself its own fullness (αὐτὸ ἑαυτοῦ πλήρωμα ὄν) is accordingly not self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεές)" (3.2). In addition to τέλειος, αὐτὸ δι' ἑαυτό, ἑαυτοῦ πλήρωμα ὄν and furthermore αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένον (remaining within itself; 3.1.) belong to the same wide semantic field as ἀπροσδεής. Referring to God, that means that he is "regarded as perfect (τέλειος) by virtue of himself (αὐτὸς δι' ἑαυτόν), but not by virtue of anything else (δι' ἕτερον)" (3.3). The close semantic proximity of ἀπροσδεής and τέλειος implies that God is to be regarded as ἀπροσδεής even when the word itself is not used here.

This implication is made explicit in *Creat.* 3.5. After Methodius has applied his argumentation to the relationship between God and the cosmos in *Creat.* 3.3—"Cannot one say accordingly that God is perfect, demiurge and pantocrator by virtue of the world? No, [one cannot]"—and made it more precise by distinguishing God from the wise and the rich in *Creat.* 3.4, he summarizes the results of his line of argument in *Creat.* 3.5: "Was He (*sc.* God) therefore even before the cosmos self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεής) in all things, since he was both father and pantocrator and demiurge as well, so that he was it by virtue of himself but not by virtue of anything else? [Yes,] that is inevitable." At this point in his exposition it becomes clear that for Methodius the term ἀπροσδεής denotes the nature of God.

At the very end of his chain of argument against Origen, Methodius returns to the term ἀπροσδεής once more (*Creat.* 7.5). He would like to refute the Origenist conception of an eternal creation without an actual beginning by demonstrating that a world without an initial genesis would be as boundless, unborn and powerful as God. Consequently it would be, like him (here Methodius lists adjectives that describe the nature of God and constitute a semantic field), uncreated (ἀγένητος), perfect in itself (αὐτοτελής), immutable (ἄτρεπτος), incorruptible (ἄφθορος), and precisely self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεής). That, however, cannot be the case, for then the world would no longer be changeable (τρεπτός), and neither party disputes that it is.

The term ἀπροσδεής is part of a similar semantic field in a passage from the sixth speech of the *Symposium*, where Methodius applies the term ἀπροσδεής to the "unbegotten and incorporeal beauty" that fashioned the soul after its own image (*Symp.* 6.1.134)—here, too, God in his role as creator is meant. This semantic field contains the adjectives

ἀγέννητος, ἀσώματος, ἄτρεπτος, ἀγήρων and αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀναπαυόμενος (cf. *Creat.* 3.1). Methodius, going beyond his train of thought in *De Creatis*, directs his gaze here to the created and its qualities: the soul, offspring of that unbegotten beauty which is unchangeable, ageless and self-sufficient, is similarly immortal (ἀθάνατος) by virtue of its creation by the un-aging—Methodius does not say, however, that it is also self-sufficient like God. That would be contrary to Methodius' theology in the above analysis of *De Creatis*, for the soul exists in no way by virtue of itself, but rather by virtue of its creator, namely the unbegotten beauty, that is, God.

Now that I have ascertained the use of the term ἀπροσδεής in the works of Methodius, it is possible to summarize:

1. Methodius employs it above all in his argument against Origen and his followers.
2. In doing so he is saying something about the relationship between the creator and creation:
   2a. For one thing, he stresses that the God of creation is ἀπροσδεής in every respect and therefore does not have need of the creation to be perfect as creator.
   2b. For another, the created does take on important characteristics of the creator, but not his intrinsic self-sufficiency or lack of needs.
3. The term ἀπροσδεής with reference to God occurs in connection with a semantic field that contains words and phrases for the description of God: τέλειος, αὐτοτελής, αὐτὸς δι' ἑαυτόν, ἑαυτοῦ πλήρωμα ὤν, αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένων, αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀναπαυόμενος, ἀγένητος, ἀγέννητος, ἄτρεπτος, ἄφθορος, ἀγήρων, and ἀσώματος. In view of the relationship between the creator and creation, it must be kept in mind that there are three categories within the semantic field:
   i.) the quality of immortality can pass from the creator to creation;
   ii.) the quality of perfection is only to be ascribed to creation in a differentiated way, for if it is perfect, it is perfect only δι' ἕτερον, that is, by virtue of its perfect creator, in contradistinction to the creator himself, who is perfect completely δι' ἑαυτόν;[11]
   iii.) the quality of self-sufficiency is only to be ascribed to God.

[11] See Katharina Bracht, *Vollkommenheit und Vollendung: Zur Anthropologie des Method-*

2. *The Application of the Term ἀπροσδεής to God in the Works of Ancient Authors known, or possibly known, to Methodius*

These results shall now be examined by discussing their possible background. In pagan and Christian antiquity it was universally accepted that self-sufficiency numbered among the attributes of God.[12] It was expressed by the term δεῖσθαι οὐδενός, by the compound προσδεῖσθαι οὐδενός, or, above all in the period after Christ's death, by the adjective ἀπροσδεής. In the following I shall give examples in chronological order of the application of the term ἀπροσδεής to God in the work of pagan and Christian ancients known, or possibly known, to Methodius, who may have served as his sources.

In the works of Plato (428–348 BCE), which were well known to Methodius,[13] the term ἀπροσδεής admittedly does not occur. Nevertheless two references in *Timaeus* approach its meaning in terms of content, namely the antonym προσδεής and the corresponding verb προσδεῖσθαι, both times in a negated form.[14] *Tim.* 33d states: "because its (*sc.* the universe's) framer thought that it would be better self-sufficient (αὔταρκες ὄν), rather than dependent upon anything else (ἢν προσδεὲς ἄλλων)." A little further on, Plato describes the one heaven using the same word: "and so he (*sc.*God) established one world alone, round and revolving in a circle, solitary, but able by reason of its excellence to bear itself company, needing no other acquaintance or friend (οὐδενὸς ἑτέρου προσδεόμενον) but sufficient to itself" (*Tim.* 34b).[15] So for Plato, self-sufficiency is ascribed to the cosmos or heaven, which is regarded as God (*Tim.* 34b). In doing so he negates the verb προσδεῖσθαι by using not the *alpha privativum* but by means of circumlocution. It could therefore be the case that these two passages in *Timaeus* paved the way for the later usage of the term ἀπροσδεής and the conception associated with it, though it does not occur in Plato's works.

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ius von Olympus (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 2, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 15–30.

[12] See Hans Conzelmann, "Die Bedürfnislosigkeit Gottes ist ein griechischer philosophischer Gemeinplatz," *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 99; see also examples from Hellenistic and Jewish writings in the passage cited.

[13] Cf. the list of Platonic quotations and points of comparison in Albert Jahn, *S. Methodii opera et S. Methodius platonizans*, Part 2, *S. Methodius platonizans sive Platonismus SS. Patrum ecclesiae graecae S. Methodii exemplo illustratus* (Halle: C.E.M. Pfeffer, 1865).

[14] On Methodius' use of *Timaeus* see Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, 537.

[15] Translation: *Plato's Cosmology. The* Timaeus *of Plato, translated with a running commentary by F.M. Cornford* (4th ed; London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1956).

Plutarch (ca. 45–120 CE) refers the term ἀπροσδεής to God only once, when in *Comparatio Aristidis et Catonis* 4.2, he compares the poverty of Aristides with the wealth of Cato and accedes to a eulogy in praise of poverty and the independent life.[16] The most perfect and divine of human virtues is said to be that which reduces need to the minimum, even though—and for the present question this is the important sentence—God alone is absolutely free from wants (ἀπροσδεὴς … ἁπλῶς ὁ θεός).[17] Plutarch thereby relativizes his opinion on self-sufficiency, which is only possible for mankind to a lesser degree than it is for God and not to a degree of divine perfection. He formulates naturally, stating a sentence with significant content simply and without further explanation. He is only able to do so because he clearly assumes that his readers take this conception for granted in the same way, and that the substance (God is self-sufficient) is universally acknowledged and completely uncontested.[18]

The author of *The First Epistle of Clement*, which was known to Methodius,[19] enlists the self-sufficiency of God in aid of his argument in a similarly matter-of-fact way. The interesting reference here is *1 Clem.* 52.1, which is within the framework of the second part of the letter (40–65), and in which a solution is produced for the problem that led to the writing of the letter: the dismissal of presbyters in Corinth. Here, one theme amongst others is the thesis that to confess a sin before God is better than to harden the heart (*1 Clem.* 51.1 ff.).[20] In this context the author writes: "self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεής), brothers, is the Lord of all things. He needs nothing from anyone (οὐδὲν οὐδενὸς χρῄζει) except that (εἰ μή) confession should be offered Him" (*1 Clem.* 52.1). For the author the emphasis on confession is here of importance, as is shown

[16] Plutarch, *Comp. Arist. Cat.* 4.5: μέγα γὰρ τὸ εὐτελὲς καὶ αὔταρκες.

[17] Eduard Norden falsely classifies this reference as a Stoic statement about God: *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (2nd ed.; Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1929), 14. Cf. Plutarch *Mor.* 159 C where Plutarch describes the autarchy and self-sufficiency of man as, "perfect purity with regard to the only justice"; here not relativized by means of reference to God's unique self-sufficiency. Also cf. *Mor.* 1058 C as a statement on the self-sufficiency of man, according to which the Stoic virtue makes men happy, self-sufficient and autarchical (εὐπότμους ποιεῖ καὶ ἀπροσδεεῖς καὶ αὐτάρκεις) even if they do not themselves possess a single drachma.

[18] For Plutarch as for Plato and the Platonists the good approaches the divine. Hence Plutarch characterizes it, too, with the adjective ἀπροσδεές among others in his description of the good in *Mor.* 1070B.

[19] In *Res.* 3.23.8.11 ff. Methodius takes up phrases from *1 Clem.* 59.3 f. and 61.3.

[20] On the structure of *1 Clem.*, see Andreas Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe* (HNT 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 13–16.

by the references cited in the following that all have as their subject confession, or more precisely the confession of sins.[21] Here he employs a regular statement about the nature of God in order to expose the exception to the rule (εἰ μή): If God, as all readers would agree, is as a rule self-sufficient, and needs nothing from anyone, then the only thing he nevertheless requires (namely confession) weighs even more heavily. So, with the help of the statement about God, the author emphasizes the significance of confession—and this argument is only valid if the statement about God is universally accepted.

Alcinous (ca. 150 CE) deals with the principle of "God" in the context of a survey of first principles (chapters 7–11) in the tenth chapter of his work *Didaskalikos*. He ascribes to him a number of attributes among which his self-sufficiency is to be found: "The primary God, then, is eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect' (that is, deficient in no respect) (αὐτοτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀπροσδεής), ever-perfect (that is, always perfect), and all-perfect (that is, perfect in all respects); divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, good" (*Didask.* 10.3).[22] Here Alcinous compiles an entire catalogue of God's qualities and attributes that gives the contemporary reader insight into the semantic field to which the term ἀπροσδεής with reference to God belongs. According to this semantic field divinity (θειότης), essentiality (οὐσιότης), truth (ἀλήθεια), commensurability (συμμετρία) and good (ἀγαθόν) are among God's qualities besides self-sufficiency, as is the quality of being eternal (ἀίδιος), ineffable (ἄρρητος) and perfect (τέλειος and other words derived from τελ-). It is particularly interesting in the light of the current question that Alcinous employs the term ἀπροσδεής in explaining another concept. He probably felt the term αὐτοτελής to be incomprehensible to his readership and "translated" (or to an extent interpreted) it with the roughly synonymous, but in his time obviously more common, term ἀπροσδεής.[23] Since Alcinous

[21] *1 Clem.* 52:2: Ps. 68:31–33; *1 Clem.* 52:3: Ps. 49:14 f.; *1 Clem.* 52:4: Ps. 50:19; *1 Clem.* 53:1–5: Exod 32:7–10:31 f.

[22] Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.3: Καὶ μὴν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς ἀίδιός ἐστιν, ἄρρητος, αὐτοτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀπροσδεής, ἀειτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀεὶ τέλειος, παντελὴς τουτέστι πάντη τέλειος· θειότης, οὐσιότης, ἀλήθεια, συμμετρία, ἀγαθόν. *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (John Dillon, ed. and trans.; Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

[23] He proceeds analogously with the older terms ἀειτελής and παντελής, using the contemporary phrases ἀεὶ τέλειος and πάντη τέλειος. A literal analogy of the "translation" of αὐτοτελής with ἀπροσδεής is to be found in Plutarch, *Mor.* 122E, but said of a man. Also, cf. the occurrence of both terms next to each other in Meth. *Creat.* 7.5, though here in cumulative, not interpretative enumeration. A discussion of all parts of

does not in any way complicate the characterisation of God as ἀπροσδεής or as any of the other terms, we can assume that the term deals with a universally accepted state of affairs for him too.

Athenagoras (ca. 177 CE), whose work *Legatio* was known to Methodius,[24] employs the term ἀπροσδεής twice with reference to God, each time in order to explain another statement. This could only be done if the attribution of self-sufficiency to God is in no doubt both for himself as well as his readers, for otherwise the validity of his argument would be untenable. In *Leg.* 13.2, Athenagoras justifies his rejection of sacrifice to other Gods by saying that "the artificer and father of this universe needs no blood, fat, or the fragrance of flowers and incense. He himself is the perfect fragrance and is in need of nothing (ἀπροσδεής) from within or without." The general characterisation of God as self-sufficient constitutes the universally accepted justification for the statement that proceeds from it, that God, who needs nothing, also has no need of the things specifically named (blood, the smell of sacrifice, the fragrance of flowers and incense).[25] In Athenagoras' *De resurrectione* 12.3,[26] the term ἀπροσδεής is mentioned in connection with the question of whether man was created accidentally and to no purpose or came into being for the sake of a specific thing (*Res.* 12.1). A partial argument within the bounds of the nuanced response to this question is that God did not create man for his own use, as he is self-sufficient with regard to everything (πάντος ἀπροσδεής), and for him who needs nothing (μηδενὸς δεομένῳ), none of the things he created could contribute

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the semantic field listed here is found with references in J. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*, 103–107.

[24] See Methodius *Res.* 1.37.1 for the mention of Athenagoras by name in connection with a quotation from *Leg.* 24, furthermore the quotation from Athenag. *Leg.*7 in *Symp.* 8.169 and *Res.* 2.30.1, from *Leg.*19 in *Lib. abr.* 12.1, and from *Leg.*24 in *Lib. arb.* 19.2.

[25] On the use of ἀπροσδεής in connection with the issue of sacrifice cf. Origen, *Cels.* 8.62; *Keryg. Petr.* 2.44.2; in addition see below.

[26] *De Resurrectione*, a work written a little later and ascribed to Athenagoras, is, like Methodius' work of the same name, a contribution to the debate over Origen's views on the resurrection directed at audiences within the Christian communities. See William R. Schoedel (ed. and trans.), *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), xxv–xxix, on this dating esp. xxviii. Schoedel doubts the authenticity of *De resurrectione.* By way of explanation he observes that in his work on the resurrection Methodius only makes reference to Athenagoras' *Legatio*, and concludes from this that Athenag. *Res.* was not known to Methodius (xxvi). The mere fact that Methodius does not quote from the work on the resurrection does not necessarily mean, however, that he did not know it: only that we may no longer prove this knowledge today with certainty.

to his own use.[27] The self-sufficiency of God is the commonly shared axiom that moves the argument forward.

In Irenaeus of Lyon's *Adversus haereses* (ca. 180–185 CE), whose body of thought Methodius adapted in many respects,[28] the term ἀπροσδεής does not occur in those parts that survive in Greek. In a passage surviving in Latin (*Haer.* 2.2.4), however, the equivalent *nullius indigens* is applied to God. In *Haer.* 2.2, Irenaeus opposes the thesis of Valentinus and the Marcionites: that the world was created by angels or another creator (demiurge) without God's will. Irenaeus names the self-sufficiency of God as one of several counterarguments: the Gnostic thesis may well persuade or seduce men who imagine God to be like man, who is dependent upon a tool in order to create something. That is, however, completely improbable "for those who know that the God of all things, who needs nothing, created and made everything by his word" (apud eos qui sciunt quoniam nullius indigens omnium Deus verbo concidit omnia et fecit). He needs neither angels nor any other weaker power as help in creation (*Haer.* 2.2.4). For Irenaeus, the self-sufficiency of God counts among the truths beyond doubt for the orthodox. He who does not recognize it strays from the path of faith. In the framework of the argument made here it has the status of an axiom posited as a religious truth, on the basis of which he argues against heretical Gnostic ideas.

Clement of Alexandria (d. before 215 CE), whom Methodius often adapted, also uses the axiomatic statement that God is self-sufficient by way of explanation for another statement.[29] In *Strom.* 6.137.4 in the context of an interpretation of the Ten Commandments, Clement explains the Third Commandment as saying that God made the seventh day as a day of rest for man. He himself knows no weariness, is impassible and also self-sufficient (ἄκμητός τε καὶ ἀπαθὴς καὶ ἀπροσδεής), unlike men, who need a period of rest. It is implied, then, that God needs no day of rest and cannot have created one for himself.[30] The row of three *alpha*

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[27] Athenagoras, *Res.*12.3: οὔτε διὰ χρείαν ἰδίαν· παντὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἀπροσδεής, τῷ δὲ μηδενὸς δεομένῳ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲν τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενομένων συντελέσειεν ἄν εἰς χρείαν ἰδίαν.

[28] Cf. Patterson, *Methodius*, 7 f. 224. Methodius paraphrases or quotes Irenaeus many times, see also the survey in Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, 534.

[29] Methodius quotes from the works *Protreptikos*, *Paedagogos* and *Stromateis*; see the details in Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, 534; Cf. also Patterson, *Methodius*, 224.

[30] Clem. *Strom.* 6.137.4: τράτος δέ ἐστι λόγος ὁ μηνύων γεγονέναι πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν κόσμον καὶ δεδωκέναι ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμῖν ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν διὰ τὴν κατὰ τὸν βίον κακοπά-

privativa here is interesting, as is the connection with Stoic terminology. Clement, too, assumes that the view that God is self-sufficient is universally accepted, for it can only then serve as the basis for the statement this passage aims to make, namely that the day of rest was created not for God's sake, but for the sake of man.

In the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (ca. 220 – 300 CE) the term ἀπροσδεής with reference to God occurs again in connection with the issue of sacrifice:[31] "If He (*sc.* the Lord of all) were to desire the savour of burnt sacrifice, offerings, sacrifices and sprinklings, who would then be self-sufficient, and who sacred, and who pure, and who perfect?" (*Ps.-Clem.Hom.* 2.44.2).[32] The context here is a row of rhetorical questions, each opening with a conditional clause with εἰ δέ. A main clause with καὶ τίς commanding the negative answer: "none" then follows. The conditional clauses contain quotations from, and allusions, to the Old Testament. The main clauses cite attributes of the Lord of the universe (ὁ τῶν ὅλων δεσπότης. *Ps.-Clem.Hom.* 2.43.1). These attributes are in no way verified, for instance by quotation or the like, but rather are taken for granted as universally accepted basic tenets. The logic of this line of reasoning is that God's self-sufficiency is in no doubt and that his longing for sacrifice is the doubtful variable. The fact that the variable, "the longing for sacrifice" and the constant element, "self-sufficiency" are mutually exclusive proves the variable, that is, the longing, to be false.

In the works of Origen, the term ἀπροσδεής with reference to God occurs in two passages of *Contra Celsum* (after 245 CE). Methodius quotes from this work several times.[33] In *Cels.* 8.21, Origen sets out, in his own words, to investigate "what Celsus says about God," and aims in particular to counter Celsus' request that Christians take part in public sacrifices (8.21.1–5). For this purpose Origen quotes three times the same sentence by Celsus: "God is surely common to all men. He is both good and in need of nothing, and without envy" (8.21.7, 10, 13). The

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θειαν· θεὸς γὰρ ἄκμητός τε καὶ ἀπαθὴς καὶ ἀπροσδεής, ἀναπαύλης δὲ ἡμεῖς οἱ σαρκοφοροῦντες δεόμεθα.

[31] See also Athenag. *Leg.*13.2 and Origen, *Cels.* 8.62.

[32] *Ps.-Clem.Hom.* 2.44.2: εἰ δὲ ὀρέγεται κνίσης καὶ θυσιῶν καὶ θυμάτων καὶ προσχύσεων, καὶ τίς ἀπροσδεὴς καὶ τίς ἅγιος καὶ τίς καθαρὸς καὶ τίς τέλειος.

[33] All occurrences in Methodius' work *De resurrectione*: *Res.* 1.24.5/Origen, *Cels.* 5.23; 7.32; *Res.* 1.12.2; *Res.* 2.15.1 and *Res.* 3.4.5 all quotations from Origen, *Cels.* 7.32f. Methodius refers to many other works by Origen, see Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, 535. Futhermore he stood in opposition to a group of Origenists who championed Origen's doctrine of the eternal creation in a popular form.

quotation continues in 8.21.7: "What, then, prevents people particularly devoted to him from partaking of the public feasts?"[34] In the present investigation, this reference is to be judged as evidence in two different respects. On the one hand it shows that the Platonist Celsus, like the other writers that we have already investigated, ascribes the attribute of self-sufficiency to God in his work Ἀληθὴς λόγος (ca. 178 CE) as though it were the most natural thing in the world.[35] He assumes that his Christian opponents share this conception, for he uses it as the foundation for his actual statement, namely that Christians, as people who understand themselves to be dedicated to God to a particular degree, should fully take part in public religious festivals at which sacrifices are offered to the Gods. On the other hand, it can be seen that Celsus' formulation is only conditionally taken up by Origen as his answer shows: Origen does indeed accept the statement about God, but he criticises the conclusion drawn from it as being invalid. It would be valid only, "if it were proved that the public feasts contained nothing wrong, but were customs founded on perception of God's nature so as to be consistent with worship and devotion to him."[36] He thinks, however, that that is not the case (*Cels*. 8.21 *passim*). As far as our investigation is concerned, Origen and Celsus, despite their opposition on the issue of how to act in a Christian manner, share a common denominator with regard to the self-sufficiency of God.

In a later passage of the same work, Origen employs the term with reference to God once more. In the context of refuting the conclusion that Celsus reaches in his Ἀληθὴς λόγος, he exposes the worship of demons that Celsus demands as false (*Cels*. 8.62): "And we ought to approach Him who is in need of nothing whatever (ἀπροσδεής), except of the salvation of men and of every rational being, rather than those who long for burnt-offering and blood."[37] This reference can be aligned

[34] *Cels*. 8.21.7–9: λέγει, τοιαῦτά ἐστιν· Ὅ γε μὴν θεὸς ἅπασι κοινός, ἀγαθός τε καὶ ἀπροσδεὴς καὶ ἔξω φθόνου· τί οὖν κωλύει τοὺς μάλιστα καθωσιωμένους αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν δημοτελῶν ἑορτῶν μεταλαμβάνειν. Trans. Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 467.

[35] On God's grace, also mentioned by Celsus, cf. Plato, *Phdr*. 246e; here God's self-sufficiency is not mentioned.

[36] Origen, *Cels*. 8.21.14–17: εἰ ἀπεδείκνυτο ὅτι αἱ δημοτελεῖς ἑορταὶ οὐδὲν μὲν ἔχουσιν ἐσφαλμένον ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς περὶ θεοῦ θεωρίας ἐνομοθετήθησαν ὡς ἀκόλουθοι τῇ εἰς αὐτὸν θεραπείᾳ καὶ εὐσεβείᾳ. Trans. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum*, 467.

[37] Origen, *Cels*. 8.62.31–34: καὶ τῷ ἀπροσδεεῖ γε παντὸς οὑτινοσοῦν πλὴν τῆς ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίας καὶ παντὸς λογικοῦ προσελθετέον, ἢ τοῖς χρήζουσι κνίσσης καὶ αἵματος. Trans. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum*, 499.

with Athenagoras' *Leg.* 13.2 and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 2.44.2 on the issue of sacrifice. On the other hand, it parallels *1 Clem.* 52, as it makes a statement on the self-sufficiency of God more precise, except that here God requires not the confession of sinners, but rather the salvation of men and of all beings gifted with reason, that is, the angels too.[38] Origen uses the nominal adjective ἀπροσδεής almost as if it were a replacement term for God, which, in fact, it was in the early Christian world, as our investigation has shown to this point. At the same time it is his concern to make this conception of God that he shares with his Christian contemporaries more precise in the spirit of Christianity. To that end, he ranks God's benevolent care for men, his mercy, alongside his self-sufficiency.

Finally the term ἀπροσδεής with reference to God occurs in a position of central importance to the final chapter of the work, *De abstinentia*, by Methodius' contemporary Porphyry (234–ca. 304 CE). It is probable that Methodius knew works by Porphyry, for Jerome goes so far as to ascribe a work called *Contra Porphyrium* to him.[39] The reference in question is found in the concluding section of the third book of *De abstinentia*. In this third book, Porphyry shows that, contrary to the Stoic and Peripatetic thesis he introduced at the beginning of Book 1 (*Abst.* 1.4–6), man does indeed have a duty to show justice to the animals, and furthermore to all other things, for example, to the plants. At the end of the work his remarks look forward towards the goal of human life, which he sees in a Platonic fashion, namely towards the ὁμοίωσις πρὸς θεόν (*Abst.* 3.26.13). It is valid even for the just, who strive to become more like God, that: "We (humans) though thanks to (our) justification do not cause harm to anything, but, being mortal, we are in need of essential things" (*Abst.* 3.26.11).[40] He who would become more like God must educate his mortal body and moderate its needs. The

[38] The two passages are closer in content than they at first seem, for the confession of sin is the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sin that finally leads to salvation.

[39] Jerome. *Vir. ill.* 83. Methodius' work, *Contra Porphyrium*, is lost; the fragments published in Bonwetsch are not authentic (*Methodius*, 501–507), as Vinzenz Buchheit has proved (*Studien zu Methodius von Olympos*, [TUGAL 69; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958], 120–129). Patterson judges the evidence somewhat differently (*Methodius*, 223). He is certainly not dependent on Buchheit's work, but is also sceptical as to whether Methodius knew works by Porphyry on the basis of chronological problems, the question of the availability of philosophical works and the uncertain reliability of Jerome's report.

[40] Porphry, *Abst.* 3.26.60: τὸ δὲ ἐν τῷ παντὶ κρεῖττον πάντως ἦν ἀβλαβές, καὶ αὐτὸ μὲν διὰ δύναμιν καὶ σωστικὸν πάντων καὶ εὐποιητικὸν πάντων καὶ ἀπροσδεὲς πάντων· ἡμεῖς δὲ διὰ μὲν δικαιοσύνην ἀβλαβεῖς πάντων, διὰ δὲ τὸ θνητὸν ἐνδεεῖς τῶν ἀναγκαίων.

just thereby increase their inner good; precisely, this is becoming more like God (*Abst.* 3.26.13). For according to Porphyry, it is true of God that, "The superior in the universe does not cause harm at all, and on account of its power it preserves everything, does everything good and needs nothing more" (*Abst.* 3.26.11). The self-sufficiency of God—here referred to as the "superior"—is founded like his preserving and benevolent attitude towards all others on his δύναμις and is the foundation of his harmlessness.[41] Therefore such self-sufficiency is the fixed point towards which man should orient himself. Porphyry indicates no source from which he draws this knowledge of the nature of God, but rather assumes it to be universally known and accepted. On the basis of this universal acceptance of God's self-sufficiency and his other qualities Porphyry can assume that his readership will find the conclusions he draws regarding man and his becoming more like God to be valid.[42]

3. *The Use of the Term ἀπροσδεής with Regard to Creation in the Works of Ancient Authors (possibly) known to Methodius*

The term ἀπροσδεής, besides being used to describe one of God's qualities, is often used in ancient literature in connection with things created by God or deriving from him. There are, however, two entirely different conceptions to be found here: either the opinion is held that the creation has the same quality as its creator and is equally self-sufficient as a consequence (Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria), or it is said that the creation lacks precisely this quality (Plotinus). In this section I shall follow both of these different paths in chronological order.

In a passage of his work *De Iside et Osiride* (*Mor.* 351 C–384 B) in which he lists the animals sacred to the Egyptians and explains the reasons for their worship, Plutarch reports on the worship of the crocodile. This animal was worshipped by the Egyptians not implausibly, for it was said that as the only animal without a tongue it was an imitation

[41] Used ethically, this harmlessness means the innocence of God; both definitions are connoted by the word ἀβλαβές as demonstrated by the texts cited in Liddell and Scott.

[42] Cf. *Abst.* 3.27 where the same thought is used the other way round and then stated negatively of man: "…because we cannot preserve God who is pure and in every respect harmless: for we are not self-sufficient in everything": ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀκήρατον καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀβλαβὲς σῴζειν οὐ δυνάμεθα· οὐ γὰρ ἐν πᾶσιν ἦμεν ἀπροσδεεῖς.

(μίμημα) of God. To Plutarch's eyes this argument was valid, because "the divine word has no need of a voice" (φωνῆς γὰρ ὁ θεῖος λόγος ἀπροσδεής ἔστι *Mor.* 381 B). The divine logos is the logos that issues from God; according to Plutarch the divine attribute of self-sufficiency has also been transmitted to it. Therefore, Plutarch describes it in the most natural manner as ἀπροσδεής, admittedly not in an absolute sense, as when he uses the term with regard to God, but rather as ἀπροσδεής in a specific sense, namely with regard to its voice.

In his *Quaestiones convivales* 2.3 (*Mor.* 635 D–638 A), Plutarch deals with the old question of which came first, the chicken or the egg. The course of the discussion leads to the question of the beginning of creation (*Mor.* 637 F). At the end of his extensive consideration, he sums up, "So it is likely that the first creature was born from earth, fully grown and self-sufficient in the perfection and strength of its parent . . ." (*Mor.* 638 A).[43] The usual epithets of God, namely perfection and strength, are also valid for the first creature, for it is described as "fully grown" and "self-sufficient."

Here Plutarch's idea observed above is again discernible, that the divine quality of self-sufficiency is transmitted to the creature that derives from God.

A comparable conception associated with the term ἀπροσδεής in Christian antiquity can be found in the works of Clement of Alexandria. In the context of a treatise on the significance of Greek philosophy he ascribes to it a contributory role in the grasping of truth. By inclusion of 1 Cor 1:24 he sets its mere involvement in opposition to the self-sufficiency of Christian teaching: "The teaching in the spirit of the Saviour is perfect within itself and self-sufficient [that is, in need of no addition],[44] because it is the power and wisdom of God" (*Strom.* 1.100.1).[45] The διδασκαλία κατὰ τὸν σωτῆρα is not God himself, but nonetheless stands in a close relationship to him that may be described as issuing or deriving from him. Δύναμις and σοφία are two of God's qualities that first reveal their efficacy when they issue from God and emerge from him. If the διδασκαλία κατὰ τὸν σωτῆρα is equated with

[43] *Mor.* 638A: διὸ πρώτην γένεσιν εἰκός ἐστιν ἐκ γῆς τελειότητι καὶ ῥώμῃ τοῦ γεννῶντος αὐτοτελῆ καὶ ἀπροσδεῆ γενέσθαι (Trans. LCL, 157).

[44] Cf. the apt translation by Otto Stählin, *Des Clemens von Alexandreia Ausgewählte Schriften* (Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, 2, Series 17, Vol. 3; Munich: Kösel und Pustet, 1936), 89.

[45] Clement, *Strom.* 1.100.1: αὐτοτελὴς μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀπροσδεὴς ἡ κατὰ τὸν σωτῆρα διδασκαλία, δύναμις οὖσα καὶ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ.

God's power and wisdom, it means that it is divine in that it issues from God or derives from him as his power and wisdom. According to Clement it is for this reason that it bears the divine qualities of perfection and self-sufficiency.

In *Paed.* 1.26.2, Clement uses the term ἀπροσδεής with regard to Christians as recipients of divine gifts, and in connection with an account of the perfecting of a Christian. This is an act (ἔργον) in which many factors are engaged. Having been baptized, Christians are inspired; having been enlightened they are adopted. They then in turn become perfect, and once perfect they become immortal (1.26.1). Accordingly, this act is described in many ways: gift of mercy, illumination, cleansing and perfection, which is explained in this passage as "the self-sufficient" (1.26.2).[46] The baptized who has received the gracious gift of enlightenment is therefore self-sufficient and as such perfect. In his following discussion, Clement supports this thesis in two ways. First, he poses the rhetorical question, "For what is still lacking to him who knows God?" (Τί γὰρ ἔτι λείπεται τῷ θεὸν ἐγνωκότι *Paed.* 1.26.3). The required answer must read, "Nothing, that is why he is self-sufficient and therefore perfect." The self-sufficiency of the Christian derives from his knowledge of God. In a second stage of the discourse, Clement considers the possibility that the gracious gift of God might be something imperfect and dismisses it immediately as nonsense; for it is known that being perfect, God gives perfect gifts (τέλειος δὲ ὢν τέλεια χαριεῖται δήπουθεν; 1.26.3). Here too the argument is structured as in the previous passage so as to presume that the quality of the source of origin (the gift-giver) is transmitted to that which emerges from it (the gift). Admittedly the term τέλειος is used here, but as we have seen, Clement treats it as equivalent to the term ἀπροσδεής just a few lines earlier. So the passage *Paed.* 1.26, like the reference *Strom.* 1.100.1, shows that Clement believes that that which issues from God (*sc.* the Christian) has the same quality as its source of origin (*sc.* God) and is consequently self-sufficient.

Plotinus (ca. 205–270 CE) on the other hand presents an interpretation opposed to that of Clement and Plutarch.[47] In 5.9 of his *Enneads*,

[46] Clement, *Paed.* 1.26.2: Καλεῖται δὲ πολλαχῶς τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο, χάρισμα καὶ φώτισμα καὶ τέλειον καὶ λουτρόν . . .τέλειον δὲ τὸ ἀπροσδεές φαμεν.

[47] It cannot be decided on the basis of Methodius' works alone whether he knew works by Plotinus (and if he did, which), because he does not quote from Plotinus—nevertheless, he could of course have read him or have gained knowledge of his teachings in some other way. It is highly probable, for we know from Eusebius, who

entitled "Soul, Ideas and Being," he supports the thesis that the νοῦς is the true being.[48] To this end he must first of all secure the fact that such a being must exist (*Enn.* 5.9.3.1–4). In this connection he gives evidence suggesting why one cannot see the soul as primary (*Enn.* 5.9.4). The first argument of three in all closes with the summary:[49] "Therefore it is necessary to assume the first things to be actually existing, self-sufficient and perfect, but also to assume the imperfect latter things to derive from them, becoming perfect by virtue of those which had begotten them in the manner of parents who perfect what they had begotten as imperfect things in the beginning" (*Enn.* 5.9.4).[50] Plotinus describes the primary (τὰ πρῶτα) as self-sufficient and perfect in the same natural manner that we have so often observed above (section II). From this he makes a different deduction from Plutarch and Clement, that what derives from the perfect and self-sufficient first cause is precisely not as perfect but much more imperfect and in no way self-sufficient, as may be concluded on the basis of the close association of ἀπροσδεᾶ and τέλεια occurring here as in the works of other authors. Only later will the primary lead the originally imperfect creation to perfection.

4. *Evaluation*

The results collected in earlier sections will now be evaluated in the light of Methodius' use of the term ἀπροσδεής with regard to God and its conspicuous frequency in *De Creatis*.

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also lived in the East in the time of Methodius and beyond, that he quotes from two *Enneads* of Plotinus' (from *Enn.* 4.7 in *p.e.* 15; from *Enn* 5.1 in *p.e.*22); see John M. Rist, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature," in *Basil of Caesarea—Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (ed. Paul Jonathan Fedwick; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 137–220, in particular 160ff. Rist suggests that the works of Plotinus were possibly available not long after 270 CE in Caesarea and were accessible for Christians in the East (162).

[48] On structure and details of the content of *Enn.* 5.9 see *Plotins Schriften*, Vol. 1b, *Anmerkungen* (trans. Richard Harder; Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), 426–428.

[49] Argument 1 (*Enn.* 5.9.4.2–12): The spirit is different from the soul, and is something higher; argument 2 (*Enn.* 5.9.4.12–14): Given that the soul is empathetic, there must be something apathetic; argument 3 (*Enn.* 5.9.4.14–18): If the soul lives in the world, there must be something outside the world.

[50] Plot. *Enn.* 5.9.4.7–10: Διὸ δεῖ τὰ πρῶτα ἐνεργείᾳ τίθεσθαι καὶ ἀπροσδεᾶ καὶ τέλεια· τὰ δὲ ἀτελῆ ὕστερα ἀπ' ἐκείνων, τελειούμενα δὲ παρ' αὐτῶν τῶν γεγεννηκότων δίκην πατέρων τελειούντων, ἃ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἀτελῆ ἐγέννησαν.

It must first be emphasized that when Methodius uses the term ἀπροσδεής with regard to God he is moving within the usage and conceptions common to his time. Our investigation into references to God using the term ἀπροσδεής in the works of those pagan and Christian authors proven to have been known or possibly known to Methodius has shown that among Christians and non-Christians alike it was universally accepted in antiquity until the beginning of the fourth century that the quality of self-sufficiency was to be ascribed to God. In this respect Methodius takes no discernibly different stance and his use of the term ἀπροσδεής allows just as little certainty about his affiliation to any specific group. It is much more to be presumed that in his debate with his Origenist opponents presented in *De Creatis*, he relies upon a common denominator in order to reduce the opposing position *ad absurdum*. Since this common denominator was extremely widespread, as we have seen, it is hardly possible to determine a specific source from which Methodius could have fashioned his argument. It is much more the case that he is swimming in the mainstream of the theological conceptions of his time. In this respect, the present investigation has, on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of references, confirmed Patterson's verdict that Methodius' view of the divine nature "is most particularly characteristic of his own time."[51]

It is striking, however, how Methodius makes use of this common denominator, which is common to the different Christian parties as well as to Christians and heathens, for his argument in *De Creatis*. That is, he makes it the basis of an argument that is supposed to refute the opposing conception. This method of argument is used only by Christian predecessors, namely Athenagoras (*Leg.* 13.2) and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.137.4). In this respect it is conceivable that Methodius had been dependent in some respect upon the authors named.

With regard to the question of the self-sufficiency of creation or of that which derives from a self-sufficient God, it is not discernible that Methodius was directly dependent upon any one earlier author or upon several. He only takes up partial aspects and does not agree with others: he shares with Plutarch and Clement the view that the creation is perfect like its creator, but, unlike them, he absolutely denies that the creation can be self-sufficient (*Creat.* 3.2a). On the other hand, he

[51] Patterson, *Methodius*, 223.

shares with Plotinus the view that creation cannot be self-sufficient, but unlike him, Methodius nonetheless ascribes perfection to it (*Creat.* 3.2b; *Symp.* 6.1.134). Admittedly he understands this perfection of creation differently from divine perfection, for he distinguishes between τελειότης δι' ἑαυτόν and τελειότης δι' ἕτερον, namely διὰ θεόν as he expounds in Creat. 3.2.[52] Methodius in a way takes up the two contradictory thoughts already extant and creates a more precisely stated balance. In view of the few texts available and the absence of literal quotations it is impossible to decide whether he knew the works of the named authors or gained knowledge of their intellectual content in any other way. To use a phrase of Patterson's: Methodius is certainly "more than the sum of his sources."[53] Such a "sum" of the possible sources cannot be constructed in this case, as they rule one another out as regards their statements on the self-sufficiency and perfection of creations, so that if we are to remain with the image borrowed from mathematics, the two terms to be added would to an extent cancel each other out. On the basis of the current investigation it is possible though to determine the "more" in Patterson's phrase with greater precision. Methodius mediates between possible intellectual positions by adopting a stance on a higher, more differentiated level towards the issue of the self-sufficiency of God and his creations.

[52] Cf. Bracht, *Vollkommenheit*, 15–23.
[53] Patterson, *Methodius*, 225.

PATRISTIC EXEGESIS AND THE ARITHMETIC OF THE DIVINE FROM THE APOLOGISTS TO ATHANASIUS

James D. Ernest*

In reflecting on the harvest of post-Enlightenment critical methodologies, several biblical scholars have wished to remind fellow members of the guild that the subject of their researches is essentially theological. Thus a collection of previously published essays by Paul Minear is titled *The Bible and the Historian: Breaking the Silence about God in Biblical Studies*.[1] Minear argues that the methodological presuppositions of the historian keep historical-critical exegetes from attending to those very elements of the biblical texts, including divine persons and miraculous events, that most centrally express the concerns of the text and its authors. His critique may be compared with Nils Dahl's essay "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology"—the neglected factor being God.[2] Current New Testament theology, Dahl complained, did not discuss God directly but only spoke "about the way in which the New Testament authors speak about God." Thus the discourse of current scholars about God is "indirect." Dahl allowed as a partial excuse for this indirectness the fact that the New Testament itself "contains few, if any, thematic formulations about God"; rather, it tends to take for granted the concept of God inherited by first-century Judaism from the Old Testament. Nevertheless, he urged "a careful, analytic description of words and phrases and of their use within sentences and larger units of speech" aimed at deriving from New Testament discourse—which is admittedly diverse in its settings, genres, and aims—a set of common themes in theology proper. He himself lists and comments on

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[1] Paul S. Minear, *The Bible and the Historian: Breaking the Silence about God in Biblical Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

[2] Nils A. Dahl, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," *Reflection* 73 (1975): 5–8; reprinted in *Jesus the Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 153–164.

several statements: God is one; the Creator is the giver of life; God is the sovereign ruler; God is the righteous judge; God is merciful.

In terms of Dahl's own critique, such statements qualify as direct rather than indirect discourse; but—to import another distinction used by some contemporary writers on liturgy—they are still in the realm not of *theologia prima* but of *theologia secunda* in that they are objective and descriptive (that is, they are statements *about* God) rather than subjectively engaged (discourse addressed *to* God). It seems that Minear, in contrast, aware that his teaching was not purely academic but was also aimed at preparing pastors and priests for ministry in the church (as was Lloyd Patterson's), wished to draw the student of the New Testament into personal engagement in the life-settings of early Christianity. Thus, as J. Louis Martyn writes in the foreword to Minear's collection:

> Patiently leading us by the hand, then, Minear transports us into the vibrant worship services of the first-century churches. Here we do not silence our critical faculties, but we do find that in that scene, text and worship flow into each other. We not only read the Bible; we also give thanks for it. For, with our early Christian ancestors we listen to scripture in a setting punctuated by prayers of thanksgiving to God, by confessions of faith, by the singing of text as we sit at table with the first Christians, even while we sit at table with our contemporaries, we praise God.[3]

Minear himself, asking how the church gains access to the knowledge of God, replies that it must do so in a way that corresponds to the revelatory event in which God makes that knowledge available, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. It enters into "authentic knowledge of revelation" by way of "repentance, forgiveness, and obedient faithfulness to its mission as Christ's body." Minear's concern to understand the New Testament by way of engagement with its religious discourse is in a way echoed in Luke Timothy Johnson's *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Study*.[4] Johnson, who says he looked to practitioners of religious studies for a description of the religious experience of the earliest Christians, ends up with a diagnosis analogous to Minear's complaint against biblical scholars: their Kantian methodological presupposition that the referent of religious language is the psychology or mentality of the religious person and not, as the religious person believes, some external power, produces a systematic misrepresentation of the phenomena they wish to study.

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[3] J. Louis Martin, foreword, in Minear, *The Bible and the Historian*, 14.
[4] Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1998.

What, then, of God in patristic biblical interpretation? By applying to particular instances of patristic exegesis the careful analysis of words and phrases in their larger contexts that Dahl invited in biblical interpretation, we can track the logic that derived from unsystematic biblical data the rationalized theological understandings expressed in the conciliar tradition. If with Minear we attend to the original life-settings of the texts we read, we will see that those understandings were not merely rationalistic but depended upon and supported a full range of religious practices, beliefs, and aims within local and global (from the view of the participants) communities. If we are persuaded by Johnson's arguments, we will take care to avoid methodological presuppositions that would reduce the religious aspects of patristic theological interpretation to social, political, economic, and psychological terms. Even if we see scholarship per se as more objective than participatory in its aim, our scholarship must recognize our texts' particular religiously engaged life-settings and reckon with their theological concerns. In this latter task especially, the immense textual learning and finely tuned theological insight conveyed through the teaching and writings of Lloyd Patterson (and others of his generation, cast of mind, and commitments) will be of enduring value regardless of the inevitable flux of methods and styles in scholarship.

The life-settings of the early Christian writings are diverse. "Early Christians heard, read, sang, prayed, produced, interpreted, memorized, preached, debated, defended, and developed canons of Holy Scripture,"[5] and much of this polyphonous hermeneutical performance is reflected in surviving writings. Many of these are deeply and extensively biblical, constantly referring both to the scriptures of Israel in the versions in which they circulated among Christians and to the primitive Christian documents that between the second and fourth centuries achieved a parallel scriptural status. The present brief study takes samplings spanning a couple of centuries, belonging to several genres within the Greek patristic corpus, of biblical interpretation brought to bear on the question of the unity or plurality of God as understood in light of Christian devotion to Christ. It begins with a second-century homily (the *Paschal Homily* of Melito of Sardis), then continues with a roughly contemporary apologetic writing over against Judaism (the *Dia-*

[5] Paul M. Blowers, "Introduction," in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 1.

logue with Trypho of Justin Martyr), a later apologetic writing over against paganism (a small portion of Origen's *Contra Celsum*), and another yet later apologetic against paganism (the *Contra gentes* of Athanasius) before concluding with some summary remarks about biblical interpretation in the fourth-century dogmatic controversies (based on the *Orations against the Arians* of Athanasius). According to Harnack, the core doctrinal question is, "Is the divine that has appeared on earth and reunited man with God identical with the supreme divine, which rules heaven and earth, or is it a demigod?"[6] A starker formulation of this question would be: Is God one or more than one? The present study suggests that this arithmetic of the divine, though treated earlier as an apologetic problem, came to be a problem for Christian understanding in and of itself, and it was resolved in tandem with a resolution of the apparently separate question of the complex unity of Christian Scripture.

Christian Proclamation

One key life-setting of early Christian writings is the proclamation of the gospel message in the context of Christian worship. Or rather, gatherings for worship constitute a whole class of life settings, since each generation and each locality—more than that, each assembly in every season—presumably faced its own concerns and challenges. Be that as it may, the adoption by early Christians of an annual cycle of worship in which the high point was the remembrance of their Lord's passion and resurrection created a special annual setting for proclamation. In the years and decades preceding the establishment of the Christian community as a distinct religious body with a definite canon including the New Testament, part of the challenge facing the Christian preacher was to ground the Easter message in the Old Testament, thus claiming Jewish scripture for Christian purposes.[7]

The *Paschal Homily* of Melito of Sardis (if we may here bracket questions of authorship) was evidently regarded as an outstanding example of its genre, since ancient Christians translated it into numerous

[6] Adolf von Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1905), 192; translated by Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 172.

[7] I presume this last phrase is intelligible even given current debate regarding the referents of "Jewish" (or "Judaic") and "Christian" in the period in question.

languages. The core image of Jesus Christ as paschal lamb is already given in several New Testament texts; Melito elaborates extensively. The announcement in the first line of this oration that "the scripture of the Hebrew Exodus has been read" (line 3) is followed not by exposition but by a long rhapsodic composition,[8] consisting of a relentless succession of short lines, punchy in meter, rhyme, alliteration, and content. The sound effects are largely lost in translation, but the sense and some of the rhythm are preserved:

> Now understand, O beloved:
> thus it is new and old;
> eternal and temporary,
> corruptible and incorruptible,
> mortal and immortal
> —the mystery of the Pascha. (lines 7–12)[9]

The death of Christ is woven into the fabric of the Exodus text, which is represented not by extensive citation (no need, since it has just been read) but by several long series of precise allusions. A fragment of Melito preserved by Eusebius (*Hist. eccles.* 4.26.14) is the first extant reference to the "books of the Old Testament," and certainly in the paschal homily the juxtaposition of old and new is a major theme.

> Old is the law,
> but new is the word;
> temporary is the type,
> but eternal the grace;
> mortal the sheep,
> but immortal the Lord,
> afflicted as lamb,
> but raised as God. (lines 21–28)

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[8] "Composition" both in the generic sense (Melito composed the homily) and in a specialized sense used in the history of biblical hermeneutics: Melito adapted and reused biblical language, weaving it into a new interpretive fabric. Compositional uses of Scripture are not marked by citation formulas or other cues. The contrast is with expositional uses of Scripture, which explicitly treat the text as an object for interpretation. For the terminology, see Devorah Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling; CRINT 1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 379–419.

[9] The Greek text of Melito is in O. Perler, ed., *Méliton de Sardes: Sur la Pâque et fragments* (SC 123; Paris: Cerf, 1966). Translations in this chapter are my own (as here) unless otherwise indicated.

Melito shuttles through juxtaposition to fulfillment, transformation, or supersession:

> For instead of the lamb came God,
> and instead of the sheep, man,
> and in the man, Christ,
> who contained all. (lines 35–38)
> . . .
> For the law became word,
> and the old, new
> —proceeding out from Zion and Jerusalem—
> and the commandment, grace,
> and the type, truth,
> and the lamb, Son,
> and the sheep, man,
> and the man, God. (lines 45–52)

The next series of lines adds verbs to express the application of these old and new names to Christ:

> For having been born as son,
> and having been led as lamb,
> and having been slain as sheep,
> and having been buried as man,
> he rose from the dead as God,
> being by nature God and man. (lines 53–58)

After further specifying how he is law, word, grace, father, son, sheep, man, and God (9), Melito ends his first section with a doxology—to Jesus Christ (10). After going on to cite the prophets and proclaim the incarnation and suffering of Christ as their fulfillment, he reads Christ in instances of righteous suffering throughout the patriarchal narrative and beyond:

> This is the one who in Abel was murdered,
> in Isaac, bound,
> in Jacob, exiled,
> in Joseph, sold,
> in Moses, cast out,
> in the lamb, slain.
> in David, persecuted
> in the prophets, dishonored. (lines 498–505)

Melito goes on, in a section chilling to post-Holocaust readers, to castigate "Israel" for his murder; then, in a climactic penultimate section, Christ himself voices a series of six "I" statements (lines 775–786), then another dozen (lines 789–780), proclaiming his identify and his acts.

Additional lines in the third person (812–821) acknowledge him as alpha and omega, beginning and end, Christ, king, Jesus, captain,[10] and Lord, raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father. Then, regarding the relationship between Christ and God:

> He bears the Father and by the Father is borne. (line 802)

The life-setting of this oration is not debate (at least not directly) but the Paschal commemoration of a Christian community living in close proximity and presumably a certain tension with a Jewish community. It continues and elaborates in a virtuoso tour de force the first-century indications of Christ as antitype of Old Testament types, asserting his divinity, his identity as creator of all and caller of Israel, and his special relationship with the Father. In the process it puts Israel in the dock for the crime of the crucifixion, but it neither enters into argument on behalf of typological identifications and fulfillments of prophecy nor speculates (beyond the level of the mutual-bearing line quoted above) about the ontology of the Father-Son relationship. Here beliefs about Christ affect the application of Old Testament texts, but biblical texts are not exegeted to produce a thematic account of God in Christ. The homily voices data of faith that must raise questions about the divine nature and the relationship of Father and Son (not the Spirit) but neither expresses those questions nor attempts to answer them. It aims to stir and focus the devotion of its hearers, and perhaps to warn against slipping back into pre-Christian understandings, but not to clarify their understanding, in any philosophical way, of the relationship of the Word to the Father.

Apologia contra iudaeos

The Christian message was of course religiously offensive to some, perniciously foolish to others, and probably merely baffling to many. Hence another key life-setting of early Christian discourse was the definition and defense or fortification of the Christian community and its message over against cultural and religious antecedents and alternatives that are traditionally treated under two heads: (1) the Judaism

[10] No doubt a reference to the captain of the Lord's hosts who met Joshua near Jericho (Josh 5:13–15), as also in Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61–62.

which in parallel with Christianity was emerging from a shared matrix rooted textually in the Bible (that is, the Old Testament) and ethnically and religiously in the Jewish people and its theology, piety, ritual, and codes of conduct; and (2) the Roman cultural system that dominated the Hellenistic world, with literary roots in the Greek mythographers, philosophers, and rhetors and manifold cultural (including religious) tendrils entwined with every aspect of economic and political life throughout its territories. The surviving Christian apologetic texts come from the hands of particularly gifted individuals whose circumstances, aims, and debating partners are peculiarly their own but nevertheless represent, and are meant to influence, the response of scores of local and regional Christian communities, and thousands of individual Christians, to criticism, persecution, resistance to conversion, or indifference on the part of their non-Christian relatives, neighbors, and magistrates. The origination of the Christian community in Jewish Palestine, its use of the Hebrew Bible (in translation) as its foundational text, and in particular its use of that Bible to warrant the divine honors accorded Jesus in its doctrine and cult inevitably provoked controversy with (non-Christian) Jews; and the refusal of the Christians to accord divine honors to either the tutelary deities or the august human majesties of their cities and provinces and of the empire as a whole produced conflict with servants of the imperial order. In the early decades, rumors of deviant Christian behavior (incest, cannibalism) exacerbated the trouble with the Romans; and, as the decades rolled past, Christian interpretation of the (Jewish) Bible, and the elevation of several sets of recent Christian writings to a scriptural status, complicated the debate with Judaism. Additional irritants could be listed. But the Christian arguments against both Judaic and pagan opponents had largely to do with defining who and what was, or was not, divine; and the Christian arguments—especially the arguments against Judaism—were largely Scripture-based. So the Christian apologists were centrally concerned with what can be derived from Scripture regarding the nature and identity, including the unity or plurality, of the divine.

Arguments *contra Iudaeos* grew out of constant contact and overlap between Christian and Jewish communities in major metropolitan centers such as Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome and numerous smaller cities. A writing that is nearly contemporary with, or only a decade or two earlier than, the *Paschal Homily* of Melito, but different in character, is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*. Whereas Melito composed biblical language into a paean to Christ without arguing for

his hermeneutic or elaborating ontological consequences, Justin Martyr calls attention to his garb, which identifies him as a philosopher, and in his first exchange with his interlocutor addresses the relationship between Scripture and theology proper. When Trypho hails the philosopher, telling him he would like to learn from him, and then identifies himself as a "Hebrew of the circumcision," Justin challenges him:

> "And what," said I, "would you profit so much from philosophy as from your lawgiver and the prophets?" "How, then? Do philosophers not make their entire discourse regarding God," he said, "and does not each of their investigations concern monarchia and providence? Is it not the job of philosophy to make investigations concerning the divine?" (*Dial.* 1.3)[11]

Justin agrees—research into the divine is indeed the task of philosophers—but then narrates the history of his unsatisfactory questing after truth among the Stoics, Peripatetics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists. When he enters his life-changing conversation with "a certain old man" in a field by the sea, and the old man asks him about his understanding of God, he gives the properly philosophical answer that he has learned: "That which always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things" (*Dial.* 3.5). He and the old man carry through a conversation on the soul, the possibility of knowing God, and the means of knowing God. When the old man asks whether it is possible for the human mind to see God unless it is ordered or arranged by the Holy Spirit (4.1), it is clear that we are diverging from Plato. Justin argues that the mind can indeed see God, at least if it is purified by virtue (4.3), but the old man compels him to admit that while souls can perceive that God exists, as do righteousness and piety, souls cannot see God (*Dial.* 4.7), and furthermore that souls are not immortal, because if they were immortal they would also be ingenerate or unbegotten (ἀγέννητος), and only God is that (*Dial.* 5.1, 5.4). The soul is not even inherently alive but lives by participating (μεταλαμβάνουσα … μετέχει) in life, because life is proper (ἴδιον) not to the soul but to God (*Dial.* 6). Thus the old man has swiftly moved the conversation from its starting point—God's nature—through a dismantling of Justin's understanding of the soul and its capacity to know God. His final offering is to

[11] Translations from *ANF* 1:194–270. Greek text in E.J. Goodspeed, ed., *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 90–265.

point Justin—who, despairing now of his native capacity to know God, asks about the availability of teachers—to the prophets. These ancient prophets, filled with the previously mentioned Divine or Holy Spirit, saw and announced the truth, including future events, especially the coming of Christ. So before Trypho, Justin's current interlocutor, can say anything, Justin has through this reminiscence of his conversation with the "old man" moved from philosophy or theology to a statement regarding the indispensability of the Scriptures.

When Trypho has his chance to respond, he brushes aside the philosophical prelude, and dismissing the notion that the Messiah has come, asks directly why Justin, if he hopes to obtain mercy from God, does not keep the law: circumcision, sabbath, feasts, new moons (*Dial.* 8 and 10). This challenge kicks off a discussion that makes constant reference to the Scriptures (Old Testament) with regard to the purpose of the Mosaic legislation, prophecies regarding Christ, and the supersession of the Mosaic laws by Christ. This discussion is not theological (in the sense of theology proper) throughout, but Justin's exaltation of Christ crescendos, moving from the first advent to the second coming in glory. His expositional citations of Scripture move toward texts that, as he applies them, make lofty claims. Quoting Psalm 24 (Ps. 23 LXX) in its entirety, he argues that it cannot apply to Solomon, proposing instead that it narrates the post-resurrection ascension of Christ to heaven, upon which the angelic keepers of the heavenly gates, not recognizing his unattractive, dishonored, and inglorious appearance, ask "Who is this king of glory?" and are told "The Lord of Hosts, he is this king of glory" (*Dial.* 36.6). The exegesis in these sections of the *Dialogue* is carried out by way of quotation, plus assertion or argument that the quoted passage applies to Jesus Christ, and sometimes that it does not apply to some other figure (Solomon, Hezekiah, etc.). Justin correlates Old Testament passages with the Christian proclamation, staking his case on the coherence and persuasive power of the resulting narrative, but not returning to the speculative level on which he began his conversation with the old man.

Trypho then forces the biblical exegesis to another level by objecting to the divine attributes and honors that Justin accords to Christ, such as his identification of him with the God who accompanied Moses and Aaron and his assertion that he is to be worshiped (*Dial.* 38.1)—claims that he calls blasphemies. The implied question: if God is one, how can Christ be God? At this point Justin introduces another text from the messianic dossier, quoting Psalm 45 (Ps. 44 LXX) in its entirety.

The quotation is intriguing, because it appears to be the earliest citation of the opening verse (44:2 LXX, in Hanson's rendering: "My heart has belched forth a goodly Word"),[12] which would turn up frequently in third- and fourth-century discussions of intra-Trinitarian relations; but Justin says absolutely nothing about it by way of exegesis, leaving Trypho to draw the right conclusion on his own. He gives the impression that he is not so sure of his footing at this point. When, a little later in the argument, Trypho again objects specifically to Justin's assertions that Christ pre-existed as God before the ages and was not "man of man," Justin actually backs down (*Dial.* 48.1). He will not give up that belief himself, but some (Jewish) Christians acknowledge Jesus as Christ but as "man of man"; and he cannot prove it from Scripture as he can prove that Jesus is the Christ.

Again the discussion veers off to various putative fulfillments of prophecy (in *Dial.* 49–54) before circling back once more to the question whether the prophets support the understanding of Christ as "another God" (*Dial.* 55.1), which for Trypho is evidently the weak point in Justin's case. Justin says that he will oblige, but excuses himself in advance from saying much by way of interpretation. He had not been planning to bring out these proofs: if Trypho does not follow them, it is because God, on account of the wickedness of the Jews, has hidden from them (except for a remnant) the ability to understand the wisdom in his words. They are texts, he says, that require no exegesis, only hearing (55.3). He then introduces his first text: the three who visited Abraham under the oak of Mamre did not include the maker of the universe, the Father, but were two angels and another God. He then reads out the text from Genesis 18–19. When Trypho and his companions indicate that they have understood the text but deny that it proves another Lord or God, Justin, despite his preliminary rhetorical blustering, concedes that they have understood the Scripture and undertakes to persuade them. Trypho grants at once that God appeared to Abraham, but denies that God was one of the three, to which Justin counters that the one of the three who went in to Sarah said "I shall return to you afterward"; and when he returns (here Justin quotes not Gen 21:1 but Gen 21:9–12), he is called θεός (*Dial.* 56.7). This close attention on Justin's part to a detail in the text, with a cross-reference to a second passage to which the first passage points, wins a partial concession from

[12] R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academy, 2005), 7.

Trypho: one of the three was God after all—but not another God than the maker of all. Emboldened by his partial success, Justin proposes to bring further biblical evidence that the God who appeared to Abraham is other than the maker of all—other in number, not in will (ἀριθμῷ λέγω ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμῃ, *Dial.* 56.11), because in the biblical texts this "other god" never acts contrary to the will of the maker of all. He then cites Gen 19:24 LXX, where κύριος rains brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from heaven (*Dial.* 56.11). This "Lord" is the maker of all (*Dial.* 56.23); but the "God" who spoke with Abraham is the one who was born of the Virgin (*Dial.* 57.3). And the same sort of argument is made again from additional passages, in some of which this "God" is called "angel of the Lord" (*Dial.* 58–60), in others "glory of the Lord," "son," "Wisdom," "angel," "God," "Lord," or "captain" (*Dial.* 61).

The "Wisdom" epithet is the point at which Justin again moves his theological exegesis to another level by specifying the relationship of God to the "other God" as one of begetting.

> I shall give yet another testimony to you, friends, from scripture, I said: that as a beginning, before all the created things, God begat (γεγέννηκε) out of himself a certain rational power…

"Beginning" here is from the passage that Justin will momentarily cite, namely, Prov 8:21a–36 LXX, but before citing the passage he takes care to set a certain preunderstanding in place by specifying the genesis of Wisdom as a begetting, out of himself, by (the Father's) will, resulting in no diminution in the Father, any more than for us speaking a word removes the word from our mind, nor any more than kindling a new flame diminishes the flame from which it is kindled. Evidently Justin did not deem "created"—the verb actually used in the Proverbs text—entirely suitable, and even "begat" had to be hedged about. Here is an exegetical strategy destined (like this Proverbs text, as it happens) for extensive use in the controversies to come: the interpretation of particular texts may be constrained by dogmatic considerations that are based upon other texts or (as in this case) simply stipulated (that is, maybe based on other texts, but those are not given here).

These late-second-century examples, then, of Christian preaching and doctrinal definition over against Judaism, the *Paschal Homily* of Melito and the *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin, exhibit several levels of interpretive activity. The rhetorically energetic Melito extensively composes biblical language into an interpretive fabric that describes the Christ event in terms of the Exodus Passover, but he does not use delib-

erate exegesis to address the theological consequences of his exalted portrayal of the Son. Justin's *Dialogue* is hermeneutically more complex. After a beginning that stakes a claim to a certain level of philosophical seriousness, he segues into a comparative discussion, interspersed with expositional uses of Scripture, of Judaic and Christian attitudes toward the law that hinges on the Christian understanding of what Jesus accomplished. That understanding, as in Melito, repeatedly gravitates toward exalted but not theoretically elaborated appreciations of his status. But unlike Melito's homily, Justin's dialogue states and presses the theological question: how can Jesus Christ be divine if there is only one God? Returning to exegesis of selected passages of Scripture, Justin argues that he is another God "in number" but not in will. Given current understandings of the nature of the biblical texts (that is, no source criticism), his careful attention to detail as he compares passage to passage evidences impressive exegetical skill. Pressing yet further, he states a theory of begetting, supporting it awkwardly with a passage from Proverbs that only partially suits his purpose. The awkwardness of this last exegetical step and the reluctance he evinces before undertaking it—within the framework of his presumably fictive dialogue setting, he is more or less forced by his interlocutor to press on—support the impression that although he has no hesitation about the necessity of assigning divine status, including pre-existence, to the Son, he has no tested and proven way of stating the relationships. Or perhaps his hesitation is a kind of *captatio benevolentiae*, cluing us in that he is especially concerned to appeal to, and win over, believers of "Ebionite" stripe to a higher Christology. Either way, his work represents progress on the way to a solution, not yet a solution.

Apologia contra gentes

Writing perhaps around the same time as Justin, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and at any rate almost certainly in the latter portion of the second century,[13] the pagan critic Celsus—"the first Greek

[13] John Granger Cook gives 177–180 as a possible range that is "conjectural and open to skeptical attack" in *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002). This book is a well-annotated catalog of attacks on the New Testament by Celsus and other learned pagan critics. For the Old Testament now see Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

opponent of Christianity to have a detailed knowledge of its writings and an awareness of the Old Testament Scriptures"[14]—collected, in the first known volume of anti-Christian polemic, Judaic arguments against the Jesus as Christ, pagan arguments against the common stock of Jewish and Christian teaching, and wide-ranging criticisms of Christian belief and practice. His criticism gained enough currency that some seventy years later Origen found it worthwhile to undertake a thorough refutation.[15] Or at least his patron Ambrose found it worthwhile. Origen's own preface suggests, on the basis of the example of Jesus' silence before the testimony of false witnesses, that really charges against Christianity should not be answered; and going further he questions the character of the faith of any Christian whose faith could be shaken by arguments such as Celsus offers. The facts of the faith speak for themselves. He concedes, however, that "among the multitude" of those considered to be believers, some might be helped by a refutation (*Cels.*, preface 4.20). This remark, together with the likelihood that Origen was writing during a time of pagan revival stimulated by the thousand-year anniversary of the city of Rome, as anti-Christian pressure was building toward a period of persecution, provides a key to the life-setting of *Contra Celsum*.[16] To whatever extent arguments such as those of Celsus were filtering down into conversations between literate Christians and their neighbors, and through them to others, Ambrose, who had himself been swept into Valentinianism for lack of adequate orthodox literature and brought back by Origen, apparently believed that a full response by Origen to Celsus would conversely fortify the faith of many.[17] Many other texts, notably in *De principiis* and in the John commentary, would give us windows into Origen's own positive teaching.[18] His response to Celsus gives us a place to glimpse how biblical interpretation came into play around the question of the nature and identity of God in the context of anti-pagan apologetics.

When Celsus takes issue with Christian objections to the worship of daemons, arguing that the various nations rightly worship the tute-

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[14] Stephen Thomas, "Celsus," in John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: WJK, 2004), 73.

[15] Cook says "the book would have been written between 246 and 248" (*Greco-Roman Paganism*, 23).

[16] Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (trans. A.S. Worrall; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 48.

[17] Regarding Ambrose, see Crouzel, *Origen*, 13–14.

[18] For a summary and references, see Crouzel, *Origen*, 181–204, and also Ronald E. Heine, "God," in McGuckin, ed., *Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 106–113.

lary deities appointed under all-governing providence to preside over them, he specifically disputes the saying of Jesus that the same person cannot serve several masters (Origen, *Cels.* 7.68). Why not, Celsus wants to know, when the daemons are God's faithful servants? Origen's response, which holds that daemons are all by definition rebellious against God, in turn cites several additional New Testament passages (*Cels.* 7.70): "All who came before me were thieves and robbers" (John 10:8) and "the thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy"; "Behold, I have given you power to walk upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the might of the enemy" (Luke 10:19); "You shall walk upon an adder and a basilisk, and you shall trample on a lion and a serpent" (Ps. 90:13). The fact that to us the passages he cites are not obviously applicable brings into relief his evident conviction—and not his alone—that on any important point Christians should be armed not only with rational arguments such as he has given in preceding paragraphs but also with more vivid biblical arguments. The point may be not so much the scholarly one—that exegesis of these verses yields propositions regarding daemons—as the pastoral one that Christians who might otherwise be tempted and persuaded to play along with the reigning civic religion should remember, whenever they hear or call to mind these or similar verses of scripture, that they are to reject the daemons in all their manifestations. Not all of the apologies follow that same strategy, perhaps because not all have in view the needs of the "multitude." Explicit scripture references are rare in some of the apologies (for example, Aristides, some of Tertullian's, Minucius Felix). Generally speaking, however, the apologetic tradition from the second century down to Eusebius of Caesarea shows ample evidence that scripture often provided both targets and ammunition for polemics between Christians and pagans.[19]

Further to the theological point—the question whether there are many gods or one only—Origen goes on (in the beginning of book 8) to cite biblical texts, especially from the Psalms, speaking of a multiplicity of gods. As bookends around these he sets at one end statements from the Psalms (he quotes Ps. 96:9 and 95:5 LXX) that there is one God above all gods and that the gods of the nations are δαιμόνια, and at the other end Paul's statement (in 1 Cor 8:6) that "for us there

[19] Regarding the passage from *Contra Celsum* here mentioned, see Cook, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 94–97. An English version of Origen's text is available in Henry Chadwick, trans., *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 450–453.

is one God, the Father of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things" (*Cels.* 8.4–5). He acknowledges these separately as so-called gods (actually daemons) and as actual gods (whose existence Paul notes) but holds that the "freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:21) lies in their not having to serve any of these but only God (*Cels.* 8.5), whom they serve through the mediation of his word and truth, Jesus Christ (*Cels.* 8.5). Worship through Jesus, but not through any of the gods, daemons, or heroes advocated by Celsus, is permitted on the basis of biblical license: the Father wants the Son honored just as the Father is honored (John 5:23; *Cels.* 8.9). Worship of Jesus as well as of the Father does not amount to worship of more than one God because (here Origen cites several Johannine verses) the Son and the Father are one. Clarifying how the two can be one, Origen goes beyond the biblical language to specify that they are two distinct things with regard to existence (τῇ ὑποστάσει) but one thing with regard to mental agreement, harmony, and identity of will (*Cels.* 8.12.25–26). In this whole section, then, Origen follows a protocol that is found widely in the patristic authors: cite scripture liberally on doctrinal and ethical points, for hortatory effect as well as for exegetical evidence; on doctrinal points, discern which scriptural texts are paradigmatic and interpret other texts in their light; and when biblical language raises questions that cannot be resolved in terms of biblical language, use whatever additional conceptual vocabulary is needed to elucidate.

In the case of Athanasius, the life-setting of his apologetic work (in the sense of writings against pagan and Judaic ideas) is complex and impossible to specify precisely.[20] No doubt it has to do partly with the need of the young bishop to establish his teaching credentials in the Alexandrian church, and partly also with his concern to lay the catechetical groundwork, over against other essays in basic Christian instruction such as those of Eusebius of Caesarea, for contemplated future efforts to persuade the monks and clergy of Egypt to follow the Nicene understanding of Christ rather than current alternatives. But the specifically apologetic aims of *Contra gentes* and *De incarnatione* are to be taken seriously. At one level, *Contra gentes* addresses the pagan critics whose laughing and mocking Athanasius deprecates. This rhetori-

[20] References to the literature on questions of time and date of writing, etc., may be found in James D. Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (Bible in Ancient Christianity 2; Boston: Brill, 2004), chapter 2 and appendix D.

cal characterization of their behavior may tell us nothing about their actual demeanor, but the content of opening chapters of the treatise makes it clear that they at least rejected the understanding of Jesus as God crucified. Unlike Origen's *Contra Celsum*, *Contra gentes* does not cite and refute one specific critic. Rather, it addresses, in a largely conventional way, numerous perspectives that may have been either current or remembered in the general Alexandrian and Egyptian environment. Early in the Constantinian period paganism is being thrown on the defensive but is by no means moribund, much less entirely gone, and Athanasius and the Christians under his pastoral oversight may have had occasion to debate locals with operative conceptions of the deity ranging from the naive idolatry that Celsus thought credible only to an "utter infant" (*Cels.* 7.62) to a more refined theology like that of Celsus himself. But Athanasius does not really address pagans of any stripe directly, except by way of apostrophe; rather, he sets out to reinforce the faith of Christians who might otherwise be shaken by pagan arguments or, what is more likely, Christians who might be drawn to certain understandings of the divine, held by other believers whom Athanasius vaguely labels as sectarians or heretics, that he claims reduce to essentially pagan notions. Understanding this dynamic mitigates the otherwise jolting transition in *C. Gent.* 6, where a markedly Platonic extended description of a fall from contemplation of God to entanglement in the material realm suddenly gives way to denunciation of heretics whose fall is from church doctrine. The line of connection has to do with their concept of God. Just as Athanasius' ideal first-formed humans, having once declined from contemplation of the truly divine, mistakenly treated elements of the merely physical realm as good in and of themselves, some of the pagans attributed substantial reality to evil, and the heretics construct in parallel to the true God from whom they are now alienated a second uncreated or unbegotten (ἀγέν[ν]ητον; we cannot know whether Athanasius wrote single or double ν) maker and demiurge. In other words, Marcionism reduces to paganism. Over against that establishment of physical reality, or evil, or an evil creator, as ontologically or existentially parallel to God, Athanasius cites the first doctrinal prooftext (though other uses of scripture occur earlier in *C. Gent.*) in his earliest surviving major work—in which he has specified at the outset that his two sources in this work will be "the divine oracles of Scripture" and "other teachers" (*C. Gent.* 1), the latter being understood as expositors of the former—and that prooftext is the proclamation of Moses, endorsed as Athanasius notes by Jesus Christ and paired with

an additional saying of his (Matt 11:25), that "the Lord God is one" (*C. Gent.* 6; Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29).

Athanasius has already, on his first mention of God after his preamble, defined God in a way that logically eliminates the possible existence of another God: "God, the creator [δημιουργός] of everything and ruler over everything, who is beyond all being and human knowing" (*C. Gent.* 2). Here (*C. Gent.* 6), in rejecting the evil Marcionite demiurge, he presses that logic—the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ is the creator of all, so there can be no other creator—with no apparent anxiety that he himself may be seen as treating Jesus Christ as just such a second God. He goes on to reject the pagan identification of multiple gods: heavenly bodies, things in the aether and the air, earthly elements, imaginary creatures, abstract concepts, and deceased mortals (*C. Gent.* 8–11). While he introduces several biblical denunciations of idolatry along the way, his argument is not exegetical but straightforwardly logical, based on the philosophical concept of God stated at the beginning, supported with one pair of prooftexts in *C. Gent.* 6, and amplified in *C. Gent.* 22: "God is incorporeal and incorruptible and immortal, lacking nothing whatever." The whole of *C. Gent.* 2–29 is given to this attack on pagan religion. From this Athanasius proceeds to a statement—devoid of cogent exegetical support, and no doubt derivative, but at any rate not derived from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*!—that the soul is immortal and can perceive God (*C. Gent.* 30–34). The subsequent argument that in addition to being perceptible by the soul (unless perhaps the mind is muddied by external factors—a caveat already indicated in *C. Gent.* 2 and repeated at the end of *C. Gent.* 34), God can be perceived in the visible creation, begins from texts in Romans and Acts (*C. Gent.* 35) but proceeds on the basis of logical analysis alone, including an argument that the unity of the cosmos implies a single creator (*C. Gent.* 39). Other gods having been disproved already, Athanasius identifies this creator as the Father of Jesus Christ (*C. Gent.* 40), then proceeds to argue, again without worrying about whether and how the two are one, that the Word orders, governs, and illuminates the universe (*C. Gent.* 41–44). The relationship of God to God's Word is characterized in unmarked biblical language—"living and active" (*C. Gent.* 40.29; Heb 4:12), the "power of God and wisdom of God" (40.34–35; 1 Cor 1:24)—and a nature simile ("good and proceeding from the Father as from a good spring," *C. Gent.* 41.7). The concern here is with the relationship of the Word to the cosmos, not the relationship of the Word to God.

And yet the God-Word relationship comes up for comment several times in the next sections (which are the closing sections of the treatise), incidentally to the main argument (at least on the surface). First Athanasius adds that those who form a concept of the Word by viewing the visible creation thereby also come to know the God who is his Father, and that the Word is rightly called the Father's "interpreter and messenger" (ἑρμηνεὺς καὶ ἄγγελος, *C. Gent.* 45.5). Then (as though perhaps these images have raised troubling questions) after commencing (at *C. Gent.* 45.17) a hasty appendix or excursus of sorts to provide concise biblical support for the entire argument against idols and in favor of the one true God, Athanasius adds a brief but very dense composition, mixing biblical and nonbiblical language, to characterize the Word in relationship to God. In the following, italics mark biblical language:

> His holy disciples teach that *everything* was created *through him* and *for him*, and that being good offspring (γέννημα) of a good *Father* and true *Son*, he is the *power* of the *Father* and his *wisdom* and *Word*; not so by participation (οὐ κατὰ μετοχήν), nor do these properties accrue to him from outside (οὐδὲ ἔξωθεν ἐπιγενομένων τούτων αὐτῷ) in the way of those who participate in him (κατὰ τούς αὐτοῦ μετέχοντας) and are given wisdom by him, having their power and reason in him; but he is absolute *wisdom* (αὐτοσοφία), very *Word* (αὐτολόγος), and himself the Father's own *power* (αὐτοδύναμις ἰδία), absolute *light* (αὐτοφῶς), absolute *truth* (αὐτοαλήθεια), absolute *justice* (αὐτοδικαιοσύνη), absolute virtue (αὐτοαρετή), and indeed *stamp*, *effulgence*, and *image*. In short, he is the supremely perfect issue (καρπὸς παντέλειος) of the *Father*, and is alone *Son*, the express *image* of the *Father*.
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> 47. Who then, who could give an account of (or "enumerate," τίς οὖν ἐξαριθμήσειε) the *Father* in order to discern the power (τὰς δυνάμεις) of his Word? For he is the *Word* and *wisdom* of the *Father*, and at the same time condescends to created beings (τοῖς γενητοῖς); to give them knowledge and an idea of his begetter (τοῦ γεννήτορος), he is absolute holiness (αὐτοαγιασμός) and absolute *life* (αὐτοζωή), he is *door*, *shepherd*, and *way*, *king*, guide, and *Saviour* for all, life-giver and *light* and universal providence. Having such a good *Son* and creator (δημιουργόν) as his offspring (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ), the *Father* did not hide him away from created beings (τοῖς γενητοῖς), but reveals him to all every day through the subsistence and life of the universe which he brings about. In him and through him he reveals himself, as the *Saviour* says: "*I am in the Father, and the Father is in me*." So of necessity the *Word* is in his begetter (τῷ γεννήσαντι) and the begotten (τὸν γεννηθέντα) coexists eternally with the Father. (*C. Gent.* 46.51–47.13, trans. Thomson.)

The formula "his holy disciples teach" (οἱ ἱεροὶ τούτου διδάσκουσι μαθηταί, *C. Gent.* 46.52, found nowhere else in Athanasius or his predecessors) offers the following summary as biblical, but in fact it is quasi-biblical, an intensification of biblical language in the direction of philosophical language. Neither δημιουργός nor the cognate verb occurs in Scripture for divine creation. The expression οἱ γενητοί or τὰ γενητά for created beings is nonbiblical, as are γεννήτωρ for God the father and γέννημα and καρπός for the Son. Also nonbiblical is the language of Christians' participation (μετέχειν) in the Word, which is present for contrast with the Word's own relationship (of begotten to begetter) with the Father. Most (not all) of the αὐτο- compounds have biblical bases, but Athanasius has intensified them: Christ is not simply wisdom but "wisdom itself" or better yet (for Athanasius, equivalently) "the Father's very own wisdom": "Father's own" occurs only in the phrase αὐτοδύναμις ἰδία τοῦ Πατρός, but we should probably infer that sense for the rest as well. Here we have exegesis by "collation of biblical images"[21] together with the use of nonbiblical technical or semitechnical terminology to interpret biblical words, that is, by the composition of biblical language into a new interpretive fabric. Athanasius deftly uses verbal threads to stitch Word and God tightly together—not that he imagines that he is doing the stitching: he is simply presenting in concise format the meaning that he finds in Scripture.

Why this intense finale to a work otherwise devoted, despite the promise in the preface of an *apologia crucis*, mainly to a rather routine idol-smashing job? We are at a disadvantage with *Contra gentes*, as compared with the *Dialogue with Trypho* or *Contra Celsum*, in that Athanasius does not tell us all the positions he is arguing against. In fact he seems to have a doctrinal agenda that is not explicitly stated. Referring back to *Contra gentes* at the beginning of *De incarnatione*, he can say that he "made a few remarks concerning the divinity of the Word of the Father and his providence for and power in the universe: that the good Father disposes all things through him, and the universe is moved by him and is given life through him" (*Inc.* 1, trans. Thomson). Here at the end he seems to be aware that the content of those remarks has implications that will need further clarification in language that goes beyond the strictly biblical. We have every reason to believe that he is already concerned with the questions about the relation of Son to Father—arising,

[21] This phrase is from Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Harper, 1962), 29.

for him at least, from the debacle with Arius and fallout therefrom—that will motivate his entire career. One who would "enumerate" the Father in order to discern the faculties or powers of the Son (even tentatively, in the optative mood) may suspect that a day of reckoning, so to speak, is dawning.

Doctrinal Exegesis after Nicea

While the early apologetic diptych of Athanasius (*Contra gentes* and *De incarnatione*) cannot be dated precisely, and some have dated it prior to the Council of Nicea in 325, it seems mostly likely to have been written in the first half of the 330s, when Athanasius was establishing his authority and his catechetical agenda in Egypt and had not yet been forced by the Council of Tyre (335) and a subsequent interview with Constantine into his first exile in Trier (335–337).[22] After returning to Alexandria in 337, he managed to stay only a couple of years before his opponents, backed by the ecclesiastical influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia and the imperial power of Constantius, forced him out once again, whereupon he began a six-year exile at Rome (339–345). The hard realities at Alexandria and his communion with theological allies in the West evidently made him ready to engage head-on the issues that he was still soft-pedaling in his early apologetic work. The first two books of the *Orations against the Arians* may well date to this exile. Scholars differ as to whether the third book follows soon after the first two or was written later, perhaps during the period from 356 to 362 when Athanasius was exiled internally in Egypt.[23] This set of three treatises, generally regarded as "Athanasius' most important dogmatic work" and "the anti-Arian classic," exemplify the exegetical strategies used by pro-Nicene theologians in the controversies of the fourth century.[24] Here the life-setting is a high-stakes doctrinal and political struggle, not to define and defend the faith vis-à-vis outsiders, but between bishops to define the terms of the *pax romana theologica* that Constantine and his successors wished to impose. The high stakes

[22] For the date of *Contra gentes* and *De incarnatione* see Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 45, 423–424, and the references given there.

[23] For discussion and references, see Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 106–111, 429–430.

[24] The quotations are from Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (London: SCM, 1983), 72.

included not just the career paths of the combatant bishops but also, as presumably most of the bishops would have said, the integrity of the gospel proclamation and the souls of their flocks.

The arguments were played out largely in terms of exegetical debate, as can be seen from the content of the *Orations*. In terms of word counts, fifteen or sixteen percent of the text is taken up with wording quoted from the Bible in the course of some 1,700 individual instances of scripture use; these draw on over 800 separate passages of Scripture.[25] But these numbers do not adequately convey the fact, obvious on a read-through, that nearly the entire burden of the treatises is a dispute over the meaning of particular biblical texts. Or rather, the burden of the treatises is that dispute over individual texts must give way to a larger hermeneutical project whereby individual texts are understood in terms of an overarching whole. This hermeneutical analogue to the philosophical problem of the one and the many constitutes the core of Athanasius' strategy in his anti-Arian campaign.[26] It could be argued that the eventual success of his side in the struggle was owing, apart from assistance received from the bishop of Rome, not to political power (which during most of the fourth century was against him), nor to cultural superiority (as his most prominent opponents were probably more learned and better connected than he), nor to the sense of the majority (since at least in the East a majority of the bishops was generally against him), nor to any pre-existing doctrinal consensus (since, as can be demonstrated from the writings especially of Origen but also of other important ecclesiastical writings prior to the fourth century, the doctrinal heritage was ambiguous),[27] but to the eventual triumph of compelling exegetical logic in combination with the powerful appeal of the ascetical piety of the monastics whose society Athanasius assiduously cultivated and whose support he claimed in and through his numerous writings.

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[25] For the numbers, see Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 113–115, 430.

[26] I use the term "Arian" without the now customary scare-quotes simply as a reflection of Athanasius' own usage. Most current scholarship now points out that the role of Arius in fourth-century theology was too minor to warrant Athanasius' gathering of all his opponents under that polemical label. See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13–20.

[27] On Origen as a point of departure for the fourth-century debates, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 20–30.

What was the exegetical logic in question? It can be schematized in terms of three levels of biblical discourse.[28] At the most particular level, one encounters individual verses of Scripture, consisting of words and phrases. This is the starting point, both in the sense that any text one happens to be reading at the moment is a particular verse, and also in the sense that Athanasius here is not writing systematically, as it were, but reactively, responding to the claims of his opponents that various verses of Scripture support their construal of the Father-Son relationship; thus he complains that the Arian heresy "deceitfully dresses itself up in biblical phraseology" (*C. Ar.* 1.1). He has in mind the particular verses that he takes up seriatim through the course of the first two orations and then again in the third. One viable way of analyzing the structure of the *Orations* would be through a list of these prooftexts that he takes on: Joel 2:25, the phrase "lord of hosts" from the Psalms, 1 Cor 1:24, Phil 2:9–10, Ps. 44:8, Prov 8:22, etc.[29] At times Athanasius is willing to engage in exegesis on this microscopic level. For example, he compares the sense of the word "better" in Heb 1:4, where Christ is said to be "so much better than the angels," with uses of the same word in various other verses in order to argue that it specifies a difference not in degree but in kind (*C. Ar.* 1.55), and later he will argue, with regard to Prov 8:22 (κύριος ἔκτισέν με), that while the nouns κτίσμα and κτίσις as well as the verb κτίζω are used for creation out of nothing, the verb by itself is also used for a change in the status of something already existing. He has much less use for grammatical argumentation, such as when he rejects the claim of Asterius that the lack of a definite article with "wisdom" and "power" in 1 Cor 1:24 indicates that Christ is not there identified with God's own wisdom and power (*C. Ar.* 1.32). In general he seems not eager to pose as an exegete after the manner of generations of Christian and non-Christian Alexandrian scholars. He does not explicitly say so but seems to feel that text-parsing activity of that sort is more appropriate to a sophist like Asterius than to a pastoral theologian like himself.

Athanasius is less interested in interpreting particular verses in isolation than in determining which verses of Scripture are to be hermeneu-

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[28] This final section covers more ground, textually speaking, than the prior sections and so is more sparsely illustrated with primary texts. For examples and supporting argumentation see chapter 3 of Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 105–182, upon which this section is based.

[29] See Table 3–4, titled "Disputed Biblical Texts in *Against the Arians* 1–3," in Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 118–119.

tically regulative. Here we come to the second of the three levels of biblical discourse mentioned above. His canon-within-the-canon consists of a set of biblical texts that could be called, in Dahl's terms, "thematic formulations about God" or, more particularly, about the God-Word relationship or the God-Word-world relationship. He would not agree with the suggestion that these are scarce in the New Testament; he has located them and uses them repeatedly throughout the *Orations*. A list of twenty-nine of these accounts for three hundred and sixty-two instances of Scripture use. The most frequently referenced are "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14, used forty-two times), "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (John 14:10, used thirty-seven times), "having become as much better than the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Heb 1:4, cited twenty-seven times), "all things came about through him, and without him nothing at all came to be" (John 1:3, cited twenty-six times), and "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1, cited twenty-four times).[30] Nine of the twenty-nine, and six of the top seven, are from the Gospel of John; twenty-five of the twenty-nine are from the New Testament. One of them is not in itself a statement about the God-Word relationship but rather a principle that disqualifies certain Arian arguments such as those that are based on analogy between the Father-Son relationship and human father-son relationships: "God is not as man" (Num 23:19, quoted five times in *C. Ar.* 1–2).

In addition to citing these touchstone texts as verses, Athanasius lifts from some of them, and from other texts, a number of titles or epithets such as Word, Wisdom, power. These are divine attributes that are explicitly mentioned in Scripture as being hypostatized—concretely existent—in the Son. Athanasius stipulates quite clearly that God has no word, or wisdom, or power apart from that which is in the Son; Christ is their name, as it were. Hence any suggestion that the Son came to be at a certain point, and so was not eternally existent, reduces easily to patent nonsense: when was God without his wisdom, etc.? A second set of epithets includes words which are not exactly divine attributes but which are similarly characteristic of Christ's work: vine, door, way, tree of life (see, for example, *C. Ar.* 2.37). Taken together, these two sets of epithets constitute a formidable body of Scripture-

[30] For the list of the twenty-nine, see Table 3–6, titled "Touchstone Texts in *Against the Arians* 1–3," in Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 154–155.

based titles that can be called on again and again to support or refute particular understandings of Christ's nature. Any formulation that is to be accepted must square both with the touchstone verses and with these titles that are for the most part lifted from them.

Another set of items, functionally parallel to the touchstone texts and the divine attributes used as titles of Christ, are paradigmatic terms or images that are characteristic specifically of the relationship between the Word and the Father, the main case being Son, and others being image, radiance or light, character, and hypostasis (*C. Ar.* 1.32). Athanasius calls these latter terms παραδείγματα and εἰκόνες. They are for the most part scriptural, but they are at the same time drawn from the realm of the created universe; they are physical realities that by divine providence are able to serve as pictures of theological reality. Thus when Athanasius asks when the divine Fountain was ever barren and dry (*C. Ar.* 1.14), he might be using a nature metaphor, but he is careful to find warrant for his application of "fountain" to God by citing biblical texts as precedents: "they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water" (Jer 2:13); "they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters" (Bar 3:12).

It might seem that the Arians are doing something similar when they argue from biblical terms and images such as Father and Son that the Son must have come into being at a certain point, or else, being eternally coexistent, he would more correctly be called the Brother (*C. Ar.* 1.14). For Athanasius, however, such arguments highlight the strictly limited usefulness of the παραδείγματα; they must be applied as Scripture itself applies them and may not be extrapolated helter-skelter. When one assumes that the terms have the same implications when applied to the divine being as when applied to human beings, one turns them into merely human models (ἀνθρώπινα παραδείγματα, *C. Ar.* 1.26) that fall under the stricture of his dictum (quoting Num 23:19) that "God is not as man." The problem is not that "Father" and "Son" are not fully applicable to God; rather, they are not fully applicable to humans, who become fathers and sons in time, by participation, whereas God is eternally and essentially Father and Son. Again, it might seem that the Arians are positing something similar to Athanasius' touchstone texts when they take Prov 8:22 (Wisdom says "the Lord created me") as a thematic formulation about God in light of which other texts must be interpreted; and indeed, that one verse gives Athanasius more trouble than all the other Arian texts combined. He states in *C. Ar.* 1.53 that he will discuss it, but then puts it off, and does

the same again at *C. Ar.* 2.1 and *C. Ar.* 2.28 before finally taking it up in detail, subjecting it to a diverse battery of exegetical arguments in *C. Ar.* 2.44–72 that justify his conclusion that in light of the whole network of paradigmatic touchstone texts this one verse (which is after all found in a book of παροιμίαι) must be interpreted, which for Athanasius means, must be given a less than fully literal interpretation.

So rather than dealing with a chaotic multiplicity of biblical dicta, each capable of multiple interpretations, including Arian interpretations, we have to do with a much smaller set of paradigmatic biblical statements, titles, and images in light of which all other biblical data must be interpreted. Thus we might say that Athanasius has reduced the biblical many to a few. But, at the third of the three levels of biblical discourse mentioned above, even these few are seen to belong to an all-embracing unity, a single overarching biblical narrative. There are many voices in Scripture, but for Athanasius really one voice is heard throughout, namely God's own Word, speaking sometimes through the prophets, sometimes through the apostles, and sometimes "through himself" (*C. Ar.* 14.6; 2.39; 2.55; 3.40). And this divine speaking subject is at the same time the object of revelation; his person and works constitute the aim or scope (σκοπός) of Scripture. To be sure, it is a twofold scope, comprehensive of statements about the Word both as *being* eternally, inseparably from the Father, and also of statements about the Word as *becoming* incarnate for human salvation; but it is all one account. (It is also an "ecclesiastical scope" [*C. Ar.* 3.58], an aim that is proper to the church.) Thus when Athanasius occasionally composes new interpretive texts by weaving together strands from throughout Scripture he is not from his own point of view creating a new fabric but calling attention to what is already there; when he harmonizes diverse statements he is only recognizing an inherent harmony; when he reads New Testament characters and events as antitypes of Old Testament types (a strategy rarely used in the *Orations* but found elsewhere in Athanasius) he is not imposing an alien pattern but exposing the contours of biblical revelation. Never really a technical exegete, Athanasius does at times express and apply what look like Antiochene-style exegetical rules, such as exegesis according to καιρός, πρόσωπον, and πρᾶγμα, but in his hands these tools, since he does not really stick with them but switches terminology easily (to scope of Scripture language, or to things said or done in a human or fleshly manner over against things done divinely), are transparently alternative ways of speaking of the unity of the whole biblical narrative. He can even leave the language of narra-

tive exposition behind for a moment and speak in synchronic, creedal language, as happens to some extent especially in *C. Ar.* 3.

In the history of biblical studies Athanasius is probably remembered most often for his *Festal Letter* of 367, the earliest extant listing of the current canon of the New Testament. Regardless of his own personal role in setting the details of that list, he is correctly credited with a role in the consolidation of the Christian biblical canon—not only insofar as he delimited its books from other books but also inasmuch as he established a mode of exegesis, or really a way of thinking about the contents of the combined Jewish-Christian Bible, that saw it as an integrated unity conveying one central message in one voice. He achieved this integration not because he set out to develop a general hermeneutical theory but because he was pursuing theological questions pertaining to the Word,[31] and more specifically to the relationship of the Word to the divine. In terms of Nils Dahl's complaint against modern biblical studies, Athanasius and his contemporaries (that is, his opponents as well as his allies) were engaged in direct theological discourse. They lacked a critical consciousness that might have spared them a certain amount of turmoil; one thinks in particular of the unquestioning acceptance on both sides of a text such as Prov 8:22 as directly Christological, and further examples of the gains of later exegetical understanding could no doubt be multiplied sufficiently to deflate significantly any romantic overestimation of the superiority of ancient exegesis to modern. And yet, to their credit, we must admit that the ancients avoided the practice of textual analysis that never attains to doctrinal synthesis. Moreover they practiced not just *theologia secunda* but *theologia prima*, theological work and study in the context a living engagement with the object of their studies. This short essay has omitted reference to ways in which God is imagined or portrayed in patristic writings of many kinds, for example, in the case of Athanasius: God as witness, judge, and vindicator of human conduct (in the historical-polemical writings) or God as source, ultimate model, and goal of the moral and spiritual life (in the pastoral writings). Biblical influences are of primary importance in these other areas as well, and those facets of theological understanding are ultimately not able to be isolated from the "arithmetic" aspect of theology that has been the focus here; they all cohere in an

[31] See Craig Alan Blaising, "Athanasius of Alexandria: Studies in the Theological Contents and Structure of the Contra Arianos, with Special Reference to Method" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1987), 232 n. 23.

integrated theological understanding. The Trinitarian understanding of God as a unity comprehending the divine Word (and Spirit, a few years afterward) coincided with, and to some extent seems to have depended upon, the recognition of a distinct and unified Christian Bible, read as an integrated whole with a focus on the Christ event that called the church into being.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN GREGORY NAZIANZEN: THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF *ORATION* 31

Christopher A. Beeley*

One of the most exciting new developments in the study of early Christianity is the increased attention being paid to individual theologians in the full context of their own thought and of their intellectual and social millieux. Lloyd Patterson's *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom and Life in Christ*, is a premier example in this regard. Patterson's study is now the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of this important figure, who contested and yet also validated the legacy of Origen, and thus helped to set the parameters of the great fourth-century dogmatic debates. Although it has long been recognized that these debates yielded the orthodox or catholic doctrine of the Trinity as the definitive Christian understanding of God, what was once regarded as a matter of formulaic, conciliar definition from Nicea to Constantinople, reinforced by selected proof texts from individual theologians, is now being thoroughly re-evaluated.[1] Just what constitutes the "Nicene" faith? Who or what is responsible for establishing it? How did this take place? Along with continued progress in social-historical research, the close study of individual theologians, such as Patterson has done on Methodius in the late third century, will shed new light on the crucial fourth century as well.[2] Fourth-century scholars would

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[1] Two recent general studies are John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*: *The Formation of Christian Theology* 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004); and Lewis Ayres, *Nicea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[2] For example, Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998) has added to our understanding of this major Nicene figure and his systematic theology, and John McGuckin's *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001) has greatly advanced the study of Gregory, Basil and the work of the Council of Constantinople.

do well also to follow Patterson's cue and give further attention to the influence of Origen on fourth-century theology, not so much in the actual debates over Origen as in the work of orthodox theologians like Athanasius, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.

In the final stage of the Trinitarian developments of the 370s and 380s, the Cappadocians, not surprisingly, stand out as ideal candidates for this sort of re-evaluation. Particularly in light of the unsatisfactory treatment of the Holy Spirit by the Council of Constantinople, we are forced even more to turn to the theologians themselves for further insight into the nature of Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy. The immediate debates surrounding the council focused particularly on the nature of the Spirit, which divided Nicene theologians like Basil and Eustathius of Sebaste, who otherwise agreed on the divinity of the Son, while the specter of Eunomius and other non-homoousians lingered on to a lesser extent with respect to the status of the Son. Gregory of Nazianzus, our most immediate witness to the council, played the leading role in articulating what would become the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit, and consequently of the Trinity as a whole.[3]

Gregory begins his systematic treatment of the Holy Spirit in *Orations* 9–12, which he delivered at the time of his episcopal ordination in 372. In these sermons he boldly asserts his full Trinitarian program, in which the Spirit's identity as God and its consubstantiality with God the Father play an essential role. Gregory's work on the doctrine of the Spirit continued beyond the Council of Constantinople into his retirement to Cappadocia,[4] making for roughly a decade of concentrated theological work. His most significant and sustained treatment of the Spirit comes in *Oration* 31, the fifth *Theological Oration*, which he delivered in the late summer of 380 before the council was convened, a piece which H.B. Swete lauded as "the greatest of all sermons on the doctrine of the Spirit."[5] Yet while the oration's importance has long been recognized, the main thread of Gregory's argument, and con-

[3] On Gregory's theological leadership in the doctrine of the Spirit, and his ensuing conflict with Basil, see now McGuckin, *St Gregory*, 204ff. Cf. Michael Haykin's view that the two Gregorys concluded the Pneumatomachian debates, in which Athanasius and Basil had been the main contestants (*The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, [Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 27; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994]).

[4] See, for example, *Carm.* 1.1.3.

[5] *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 240. Haykin calls it "the climax and conclusion of [Gregory's] dialogue with the Pneumatomachoi of Constantinople, the best known of

sequently the full implications of his doctrine, have typically escaped modern commentators. Here we have a premier example of just the sort of classic early Christian text that has long been considered familiar to scholars and constructive theologians, yet which stands in urgent need of reevaluation on several fronts. In this chapter I will seek to bring out the central vein of Gregory's argument in *Oration* 31, with attention to Gregory's polemical, rhetorical, and constructive concerns, in the interest of contributing to a greater understanding of Gregory's larger theological endeavor.[6]

While early Christian doctrinal development always involves the interpretation of Scripture in one way or another, Gregory's pneumatology engages with hermeneutical concerns in a distinct and profound way. In a manner not seen since Origen,[7] Gregory brings together a theological understanding of the Spirit's nature and work with basic hermeneutical theory and attention to the sacramental and ascetical life of the Church.[8] The immediate polemical situation makes the exegetical question a matter of immediate and central concern. The Pneumatomachians, and apparently the Eunomians as well,[9] have argued that, in declaring the Spirit to be God and consubstantial with the Father, Gregory has introduced "a strange God, of whom Scripture is silent" (*Or.* 31.1).[10] The point is not lost on Gregory: he knows full well that the Bible does not plainly say that the Holy Spirit is "God,"

Gregory's theological orations and his definitive statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit" (*Spirit of God*, 174).

[6] On which, see now Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; New York: Oxford, 2008).

[7] To a lesser extent, Basil is an example of this as well, most notably in *Eun.* 1.

[8] Hermeneutical concerns of course figure also in Gregory's doctrine of the Son, but they are different in several important respects.

[9] It is notoriously difficult to identify who are Gregory's interlocutors in each section of the oration. As Frederick Norris put it, "This oration reeks with the smell of live debate and intolerance, problems not yet clarified, parties not yet solidified" (*Faith gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae vol. 13, intro. and commentary by Frederick W. Norris, trans. by Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991], 190).

[10] Hereafter references to *Oration* 31 will be given by section number in parentheses. Haykin takes Gregory's remark in *Or.* 31.21, "Time and again you return to the silence of Scripture," together with those in sections 1 and 29, as evidence that this was an important point in the Pneumatomachians' theological position. *Spirit of God*, 175, n. 36. However, we do not possess sufficient evidence, apart from these remarks of Gregory's, to determine whether this was in fact the case. It is unclear whether Gregory places the Eunomians in this group as well; Norris argues that he does (*Faith Gives Fullness*, 203).

and he naturally believes that the Church's doctrine of the Spirit must be biblical. But in his mind the question is not whether or not one relies on Scripture, but *how* one does so, and what exactly this involves hermeneutically, theologically, and ecclesially.

Although it may seem to be an insignificant piece of rhetorical invective, Gregory in fact gives a brief indication of the real issue in his initial reply to his detractors:

> Those who are annoyed with us for introducing a foreign and interpolated God—the Holy Spirit—and who fight hard to defend the letter, should know that they are afraid where there is nothing to fear. They need to understand clearly that their love of the letter is but a cloak for their impiety, as will be demonstrated later on, when we refute their objections as best we can. (3)

Several times Gregory affirms that the Spirit's divinity is indicated in Scripture,[11] but he issues an important qualification. Borrowing Origen's cardinal hermeneutical distinction,[12] he maintains that the Bible proclaims the Spirit's divinity "according to the Spirit," though not "according to the letter" (2 Cor 3:6). He states that the biblical witness to the Spirit's divinity has been shown

> by the many people[13] who have treated the subject and handled the divine Scriptures, not with indifference or as a mere pastime, but have

[11] See also *Or.* 31.5, 21.

[12] Origen extensively develops the letter-spirit dichotomy of 2 Cor 3:6 in *princ.* 4, a text which Gregory is largely responsible for preserving in Greek by including it in the *Philocalia*, which he edited along with Basil.

[13] Gregory is probably referring to both traditional and contemporary interpreters, especially Origen and the circle of theologians that includes Amphilochius of Iconium, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa (see Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, 185, commenting on section 2). Gregory's reference to his contemporaries stems as much, if not more, from a desire to capitalize on their reputations for the sake of his own authority, rather than from actual theological agreement—at least in the case of Basil, with whom he vehemently disagreed over the confession of the Spirit's divinity until Basil's death on January 1, 379. Gregory's disagreement with Gregory of Nyssa may not have set in before the council; although he was a disciple of Basil, Amphilochius does seem to have supported Gregory's doctrine at the council (Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 182; and see nn. 80–83 for further bibliography). In section 2 Gregory likewise mentions "others" who have undertaken systematic studies of the Spirit in Scripture, and in section 28 he reiterates his Trinitarian position using terms which, he says, "one of the inspired men explained not long ago." The latter statement has traditionally been thought to refer to the creed ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus (PG 10.985A); however, this is unlikely, not least because this creed is probably spurious, being the later creation of Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory is not referring to Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion*, which, as I have argued elsewhere, he does not know (Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 277–283).

> gone beneath the letter and looked into the inner meaning, and have been deemed worthy to see the hidden beauty, and have been illuminated by the light of knowledge. (21)

For Gregory the confession of the Spirit's divinity arises from the interpretation of Scripture according to the Spirit, or spiritual exegesis—from the perception of the deeper meaning of Scripture, which comes only with the illumination of the interpreter by the divine light.

In what, then, does this spiritual interpretation consist? In a way that ironically favors the Pneumatomachian position, some commentators have read Gregory's oration with the expectation that he is going to provide an explanation directly from the biblical text.[14] But this is exactly what he means not to do. Although he addresses the exegetical question at the beginning of the oration, Gregory's appeal to the spirit versus the letter of Scripture tacitly acknowledges that the text of Scripture does *not* in fact declare that the Spirit is God; nor does he appeal to biblical texts that indicate the Spirit's divinity in other respects until nearly the end of the oration. Within the framework outlined by these beginning and ending sections, Gregory thus creates a rhetorical space in which to make his central argument.

Gregory first addresses his opponents' more technical, logical objections to the divinity of the Spirit, and only after this attends to the Scriptures and makes his more fundamental arguments, just as he has done in his treatment of the divinity of the Son in *Orations* 29–30. Following these introductory remarks, Gregory makes his case through a series of descending, deconstructive steps in sections 4–27, which ultimately lead us to the ground of his pneumatology in section 28, near the end of the text. While there is a good deal of constructive theology in these middle sections, particularly on the logic of the Trinity,[15] his immediate point for the advancement of his pneumatology is not to prove the Spirit's divinity or the doctrine of the Trinity—a feat which he believes is impossible anyway[16]—but rather to show that it is not logically *im*possible for the Spirit to be God and consubstantial with the Father, as he believes, even if the Bible does not explicitly say so.

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[14] For example, Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 243–244.

[15] In section 8 we find an important contribution to Trinitarian terminology, where Gregory identifies the generation of the Spirit as "proceeding" from the Father (ἐκπορεύεσθαι, from John 15:26, or προιέναι or πρόοδος, *Ors.* 25.16; 39.12), as distinct from the Son's being "begotten" (γεννητός).

[16] See, for example, the end of *Or.* 28.28.

In sections 22–24 Gregory turns his attention from his opponents' logical objections back to their charge of τὸ ἄγραφον—that the Spirit's divinity is not witnessed in Scripture—with which the piece began.[17] Here Gregory shows that since there are things that exist but are not clearly named in Scripture, such as the fact that the Father is 'unbegotten,' on which everyone in the debate agrees; therefore the divinity of the Spirit is possible. To rule out such things as being unbiblical is, he says, a clear case of enslavement to the letter of Scripture and a preference of syllables over the actual facts (τὰ πράγματα).[18]

With this echo of the deeper issue of spiritual exegesis, soon to be addressed directly, Gregory then makes a second and final defensive argument, this time from the Bible itself, in what has since become one of the most famous passages in his corpus (25–27). These sections have long been regarded as a major patristic statement of the progress of the divine economy and of the positive role of tradition in the development of Christian dogma.[19] Yet in the argument at hand, Gregory's approach is still indirect and negative. Gregory appeals not to particular passages on the Holy Spirit, but to the overarching sequence of the covenants, in order to justify the silence of Scripture and to point to where the real witness to the Spirit's divinity can be found.

There are, Gregory says, the three great changes, or "earthquakes," in human history, which occur with the giving of the Old and the New Covenants and with the coming eschatological consummation. Each time God moves his people from one set of beliefs and practices to another and from one degree of divine revelation to another:

> The Old Covenant[20] proclaimed the Father openly and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son and suggested the deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit itself dwells among us and provides us with a

[17] The structure of this section is based on Origen, *princ.* 4.2.9. Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, 204.

[18] On the Epicurean and Aristotelian background to Gregory's philosophy of language, which he largely shares with Basil, see Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, 192; although Origen should perhaps be cited as the major influence here (e.g., *princ.* 4.2.2).

[19] See Plagnieux, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 50–56; Paul Gallay, SC 250:322–332, n. 4 and 326–329, n. 2. Hanson follows Gregory's argument fairly accurately, but with such brevity as to leave its substance undisclosed (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988], 782–783). On the novelty and influence of these sections, see Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, 206–207.

[20] Or "Testament" (διαθήκη). In these sections Gregory shifts from the sense of covenant-relationship to that of a written testament, as he makes ready to cite biblical passages.

> clearer demonstration of itself. For it was not safe to proclaim the Son clearly when the divinity of the Father was not yet acknowledged; or to burden us further (if I may put it somewhat boldly) with the Holy Spirit when the divinity of the Son had not yet been received. (26)

Under the Old Covenant God reveals himself to Israel primarily as the all-transcendent Father, while only hinting at the person of the Son (perhaps through prophecies of the coming Redeemer). The New Covenant then reveals the Son directly in the person of Jesus, although the revelation of the Holy Spirit is only suggested (presumably by Jesus' promise of the other Comforter and the references to the Spirit in Acts and Paul's letters). But now in the age of the church, which began with Jesus' ascension to the Father and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit "dwells among us" and reveals itself to Christians directly.

Yet just as important as the sequence of events is their character and purpose. For Gregory, God's self-revelation as Father, and then Son, and then Holy Spirit reflects an increase in the intensity of the revelation, so that each successive stage prepares the recipients for the next one.[21] Thus the Son conveys God more powerfully than the Father does, and the Spirit reveals God more powerfully than the Son. Drawing on John's gospel,[22] and, we may surmise, the narrative of Acts and Pauline texts such as 1 Cor 12:2, Gregory notes that the knowledge of God in the Holy Spirit[23] surpasses the disciples' knowledge of God in Jesus before Pentecost, just as their knowledge of God in Jesus exceeded Israel's knowledge of the Father alone; and of course eschatological knowledge will surpass all three.[24] The direct revelation of the Spirit to the church is therefore the apex of the human encounter with God thus far. (In addition to its constructive value, the point further criticizes the Eunomians and Pneumatomachians, who, by implication, are denying God's presence and saving mercy in the most immediate sense.) Taken

[21] Underlying this scheme is Gregory's conviction, which he shares with Origen, that the knowledge of God is inherently transformative, and that the more one comes to know God, the more one is enabled to know God further.

[22] John. 14:12, 26; 16:12.

[23] Even though he is focusing here on the role of the Spirit, Gregory believes that the knowledge of God always takes place through the Word made flesh. See his imaginative vision of God on Mount Sinai while being sheltered by the rock, which is "God the Word incarnate for us," in *Or.* 28.4.

[24] Gregory is not saying that the Son and the Spirit are more powerful in themselves, but simply that they convey the divinity more powerfully in the divine economy.

out of order, Gregory says, the Son and the Spirit would be like food beyond our strength, or direct sunlight to the naked eye. Likewise, the gradual giving of the Spirit to the disciples, which Gregory harmonizes from the synoptic gospels and John, takes place in increasing intensity corresponding to the disciples' growing capacity to receive it. And so, "by gradual additions, and, as David says, by 'ascents' (Ps. 83:6 LXX) and advances and progress 'from glory to glory' (2 Cor 3:18), the light of the Trinity shines upon the more illuminated" (26).

Finally, Gregory brings the entire scheme to bear on the question at hand in what he believes is an original interpretation that he has not found in other theologians. Among the things that Jesus said the disciples could not bear at the time, but which the Spirit would teach them later when they were capable of receiving it,[25] the greatest of all is the divinity (θεότης) of the Spirit itself (27). Even according to the letter, in other words, the Bible indicates that the revelation of the Spirit's divinity will come not in its own pages, but in the life of the church, according to the Spirit. Though he has not directly proven the Spirit's divinity from the literal sense of Scripture, which he concedes is impossible, Gregory shows indirectly in sections 25–27 that, in addition to being logically possible (22–24), the divinity of the Spirit is both exegetically possible and even to be expected. Having removed the last obstacle in his path, he then moves finally to the real ground of the doctrine of the Spirit in the sections that follow.

What, then, is this direct revelation of the Spirit to the church, which enables the exegesis of the Spirit's divinity "according to the Spirit"? Gregory drops a few hints early in the oration, such as his rhetorical question, "If [the Spirit] is the same rank with myself, how can it make me God or join me with the Godhead?" (4). And again, "If [the Spirit] is a creature, how do we believe in it, how are we made perfect in it?" (6) With classical rhetorical ethos, Gregory appeals to his own experience and that of others, as well as to theological conviction, to say that the Spirit must be divine because it *does* "make us God" and "join us with the Godhead."

Yet for polemical, rhetorical, and constructive theological reasons, Gregory does not disclose "the more perfect reason" (12) for the divinity of the Holy Spirit until late in the oration. The point comes as an extended rhetorical question:

[25] John 14:26; 16:12.

> If [the Spirit] is not to be adored (προσκυνητόν), how can it deify me by baptism? And if it is adored, how is it not worshiped (σεπτόν)? And if it is worshiped, how is it not God? The one is linked to the other, a truly golden and saving chain. (28)

Here at last Gregory identifies the direct proof of the Spirit's divinity in a chain of reasoning that begins with the deification of Christians through baptism. Because the Spirit deifies Christians in baptism (and before and after baptism)[26]—it is for this reason adored, holy and divine.[27] For Gregory, the experience of deification is thus the basis even for arguments from worship. In section 12, for example, when he discusses the biblical passages that address whether Christians in fact worship the Spirit or only *in* the Spirit, he does so under the disclaimer that "the more perfect reason" is still to come when he discusses τὸ ἄγραφον, that is, in section 28, which deals with baptismal deification. Likewise, when Gregory argues against the Eunomians and the Pneumatomachians that things of the same essence can indeed be numbered separately, he merely defends the logical possibility that the Spirit can be consubstantial with the Father and also separately numbered (17–20). His remark at the beginning of these sections, "Even if it means some hard work, I will not abandon the object of my adoration" (17), indicates that the real ground for believing that the Spirit *must* be understood in this way is the experience of deification. The dependence of the arguments from worship[28] on the argument from baptismal deification is most clearly stated as follows:

> From the Spirit comes our regeneration (ἀναγέννησις, John 3:3–5), and from our regeneration our recreation (ἀνάπλασις, 2 Cor 5:7), and from our recreation our acquaintance (ἐπίγνωσις) with the honor of the one who recreates us. (28)

The sequence of theological knowledge is clear: the regeneration that Christians receive in baptism leads to the fuller knowledge of the Spirit who works these things. For Gregory this "order of theology" (τάξις θεολογίας, 27) is "a truly golden and saving chain" (28), linking the witness of Scripture inseparably to the Christian life.[29] We are now at

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[26] *Or.* 31.29. See also Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 85–87, 108–110, with further references.

[27] The argument of course assumes that all parties agree that the Spirit is the effective cause of deification in baptism and sanctification, which may or may not be the case.

[28] Found in *Or.* 31.12, 14, 17, and 28.

[29] Following Kopecek's argument that later 'Arian' baptismal practice lacked both

the ascetical and hermeneutical foundation of Gregory's pneumatology, and of his doctrine of the Trinity. The theological apprehension of the Spirit, as well as Christian worship, arise directly from the knowledge of God in the Holy Spirit. While he draws heavily on Origen, Gregory's clarification of the relationship between the work of the Spirit in the church and theological understanding within a Trinitarian program is arguably his most important contribution to orthodox pneumatology.[30]

Not only is deification the centerpiece of Gregory's pneumatology, establishing the confession of the divinity of the Spirit, but it is at the same time the active ingredient in his understanding of spiritual exegesis. The transitional statement at the beginning of section 29 points the way:

> *This*, therefore, is what one can say on the supposition that it is unscriptural (τὸ ἄγραφον). But now a swarm of testimonies will come to you, from which it will be shown that the divinity of the Spirit is very much written in Scripture (ἔγγραφος), for those who are not very dull or strangers to the Spirit. (29)

Only after he has established the church's direct knowledge of God in the Spirit does Gregory make direct use of the biblical witness to the Spirit, thus completing his initial proposal of spiritual exegesis with a strong rhetorical chiasmus that frames the oration. From the perspective of the church's baptismal knowledge of God, and only from that perspective, the Bible does indeed indicate the Spirit's divinity, "according to the Spirit"—that is, by virtue of the interpreter's participation

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the triple immersion and the invocation of the Spirit or the Son, Norris notes that Gregory's argument is much less persuasive if one has a different view of salvation or follows a different liturgical tradition (*Faith Gives Fullness*, 208).

[30] Several scholars have briefly touched on Gregory's argument here, though typically without perceiving its full importance for his spiritual exegesis and his doctrine of the Spirit and the Trinity. In a section on the sources of theology, Plagnieux identifies the basis of Gregory's hermeneutic in the twin principles of the divine economy and "réalisme exégétique" (his term for Gregory's overall exegetical approach) (*Grégoire de Nazianze*, 51, n. 39). Hanson notes that Gregory goes farther than Basil's appeal to extra-biblical practices by arguing that "for the divinity of the Holy Spirit the witness of Scripture must be supplemented by, or interpreted in the context of, the religious experience of the church and of the Christian individual," and he speculates that it was just this sort of argumentation, which I have called spiritual exegesis, that gave Jerome cause to say that Gregory was his master in biblical interpretation (*Search*, 783). Norris comments that Gregory's argument is both ontological and soteriological (*Faith Gives Fullness*, 187), and he states that "deification and baptism are joined as crucial issues" (209). Haykin notes that Christ's redemption is "brought home" to the individual only by the Spirit (*Spirit of God*, 176).

in the Spirit. Gregory gives a resumé of classic texts that support his doctrine in this way, in a passage which Hanson calls "a densely packed and beautifully expressed cento of biblical allusions"[31] (29). The texts that Gregory compiles speak of the Spirit's role in the career of Christ, which displays its divine power; the numerous titles of dignity ascribed to the Spirit; and above all the Spirit's activity of creation, restoration and regeneration.[32] In sum, the Spirit is able to do everything that God does.[33] Christians' divinization and knowledge of God in the Holy Spirit enables them to identify God in such texts. In other words, one must know the divinity of the Holy Spirit in the church's sacramental and ascetical life in order to interpret the biblical witness to the Spirit; the two are inseparable. For Gregory, the Bible thus corroborates the church's theological knowledge, just as Christians undergo the same sanctification attested in Scripture.

Once it is plainly in view, the spiritual exegesis of the Spirit's divinity further clarifies Gregory's invective remarks against his opponents, which may appear to the modern reader as capricious, *ad hominem* attacks. Such remarks near the beginning and the end of the oration (3, 29, 30) form another inclusio around the oration's main argument. When Gregory tells his opponents that if they have any doubt that the Scriptures proclaim the Spirit as God they must be "strangers to the Spirit" (29) or "extraordinarily dull and far from the Spirit" (30), in a sense he means this quite literally. They do not perceive the Spirit's divinity in Scripture because they do not acknowledge God in the Holy Spirit who is present in the church.

In broader scope, the fifth *Theological Oration* shows more clearly than any other text the hermeneutic of piety that Gregory regards as essential to the task of doing theology. Just as he began the oration by appealing to the aid of the Spirit (2), Gregory ends the piece by saying that he means to abandon all images and cling instead to "the more pious conception" of God, to "take the Holy Spirit as my guide

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[31] "Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit," *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968): 254, quoted in Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 175, n. 37.

[32] Norris (*Faith Gives Fullness*, 209) speculates that the first set of parallels is probably addressed to the Pneumatomachians, and the second and third sets (on the lofty titles of the Spirit and the Spirit's divine works) primarily to the Eunomians.

[33] Note that, taken on its own apart from spiritual exegesis, the cooperation of the three persons is not a proof of the divinity of the Spirit or of the Trinity, as it is often thought to be. Cf. the prominence of Trinitarian cooperation in Gregory of Nyssa's *To Ablabius*.

and, in its company and in partnership with it, safeguard to the end the genuine illumination that I have received from it, as I strike out a path through this world" (33). Moreover, the crucial role of the theologian's piety is the topic with which Gregory began the series in *Oration* 27, so that *Oration* 31 forms an even larger inclusio, framing his great Trinitarian project within this theme. Similar hermeneutical and epistemological approaches run throughout Gregory's works, rooting his doctrine of the Trinity in the very sort of practical, communal, and constantly constructed matters to which so many scholars of early Christianity are now giving renewed attention.

Gregory's pneumatology had a rather tumultuous reception in the summer following his momentous fifth *Theological Oration*.[34] The bishops at the Council of Constantinople refused to confess the Spirit's full divinity and consubstantiality with God the Father, as Gregory had urged them to do, in what he would come to see as the crucial point of his career. Caught in the middle of a power struggle between the Antiochenes and the newly arrived Alexandrians, he was then presented with the spurious charge of having translated his episcopal see against the canon law of the Eastern church. Fed up with vacuous ecclesiastical power brokering and the imperial policy of fudging theology for the sake of political expediency, Gregory gladly resigned his presidency of the council and left the capital for good, determined to set the record straight in the remaining years of his theological activity. From his greatest defeat, he ultimately triumphed. Through such pastoral and literary efforts as we have examined here, Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity soon proved to be the real standard of the orthodox faith,[35] and, with the greatest of irony, it became the lens through which the church has subsequently interpreted the council of 381 itself, despite the fact that Gregory was not among those bishops listed as guarantors of the catholic faith in the subsequent Theodosian legislation.[36] Such is the kind of new insight on early Christian thought and practice that we may expect to find as even the familiar subjects of research are explored in new and more comprehensive ways.

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[34] On the following developments, see now McGuckin, *St Gregory*, chs. 6–7.

[35] See the Letter of the Synod of Constantinople 382, in Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 5.9.10–13.

[36] *Theodosian Code* 16.1.3.

DIVINE SEMIOTICS AND THE WAY TO THE TRIUNE GOD IN AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

KHALED ANATOLIOS*

Introduction

Among the notable distinctions of Augustine's *De Trinitate* is the sheer variety of tasks that are encompassed by the overall project of the work. It contains a sustained polemic against the Western "homoian" Arians as well as against Neoplatonic (Plotinian and Porphyrian) soteriology.[1] We find Augustine engaging in elaborate exposition of the exegetical foundations for Trinitarian doctrine, followed by a close analysis of conciliar formulations, thereby recapitulating much of the doctrinal debates of the fourth century.[2] His recounting of the manifestation of the Trinity in salvation history finds its climax in a meditation on the Incarnation of the Word (Book 4) that integrates Trinitarian doctrine with christology and soteriology. Perhaps most famously, he articulates

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[1] On the anti-homoian polemic, see especially M. Barnes, "The Arians of Book V and the Genre of *De Trinitate*," *JTS* 44 (1993): 185–193; "Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine's *De Trinitate* I," *Augustinian Studies* 30:1 (1999): 43–59; "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J., eds., *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 145–176; "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 329–355; see also L. Ayres, "Remember that you are Catholic (*serm.* 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39–82. On the anti-Neoplatonic polemic, see especially J. Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103–123.

[2] Along with the previously cited works of M. Barnes and L. Ayres, see also J. Pelikan, "*Canonica regula*: The Trinitarian Hermeneutics of Augustine," in Joseph C. Schnauabelt and Frederick van Fleteren, eds., *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith"* (New York & Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 329–343.

a theological anthropology and a phenomenology of human consciousness that attempts to construe a Trinitarian imprint on the structure of the human spirit. Throughout the work, Augustine is concerned with leading his readers in a spiritual exercise that is distinctive in its exhortations to defer to the authority of ecclesial teaching, and to engage in contemplation that is Christ-centered and ultimately eschatological in its orientation.[3] Such an abundance of riches can easily bring an interpreter to embarrassment. The question arises as to whether it is possible to have a unified and synoptic view of the whole work that would be commensurate with Augustine's own judgment that his "inquiry proceeds in a closely-knit development from the first… to the last."[4]

Up until recently, the prevailing resolution to the question of the structure and unity of the work has been to divide it into two halves within a framework of the interplay between faith and reason. In this schema, the first half of the work (Bks. 1–8) is concerned with the articulation of scriptural and ecclesial faith, followed by the appropriation of this faith by reason in the second half (Bks. 9–15). More recently, the appropriateness of the framework of faith and reason has been seriously questioned.[5] It has been pointed out that such traditional interpretations labor under anachronistic conceptions, most notably the post-medieval notion of an autonomous reason that is unguided by revelation. Such a conception of reason is nowhere to be found in Augustine's work. Moreover, the division of the work into two halves along the lines of this framework seems to distort the text, since there is "rational" reflection on scriptural and ecclesial faith in the first half and scriptural reflection on the search for a Trinitarian image in human consciousness in the second half.

Yet, there has not emerged in recent scholarship any consensus on an alternative schema for interpreting the structure of the work as a

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[3] On Augustine's conception of the soul's ascent, see Frederick van Fleteren, "Ascent of the Soul," in Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); see also L. Ayres, "The Christological Context of Augustine's *De Trintiate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII–XV," *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998): 114–116. On the Christocentrism of *Trin.*, see Ayres, "The Christological Context"; on the eschatological orientation of Trinitarian contemplation, see Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity."

[4] *Trin. Prologue*; translated in Edmund Hill, *The Trinity* (The Works of Saint Augustine. A translation for the 21st Century; New City Press, 1990), 63.

[5] See especially Hill, *The Trinity*, 21–24; Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*"; Ayres, "Remember that you are Catholic."

whole and the stages of the movement of its thought.[6] A work as complex and multi-layered as *De Trinitate* can probably not be encompassed by a single structural pattern and this interpretation will not claim to uncover *the* structure of the work. Rather, it is an attempt to propose one schema for discerning the coherence of the work and the progress of its logic. To this end, I invoke a category that belongs to the repertoire of structuralist literary criticism, that of "binary oppositions." A structuralist literary analysis tries to discern the oppositional pairs that govern the construction of meaning in a given text.[7] Applying this category first of all to the history of interpretation of *De Trinitate*, we can say that the binary opposition that has been invoked most often in traditional interpretations has been that of faith and reason. In this paper, I shall go on to note a whole series of intersecting binary oppositions that recur throughout the work, such as faith-sight (*fides-visio*), knowledge-contemplation (*scientia-sapientia*), and use-enjoyment (*uti-frui*). But the interpretation offered here proposes that a key, albeit largely implicit, binary opposition that governs the structure of the work is that of "*signa-res*" ("signs and things"). This framework is paradigmatic in Augustine's thinking, from the early *de magistro* (ca. 389) to the later *De Doctrina Christiana*. The latter is in large part contemporaneous with *De Trinitate*, and approaches biblical exegesis with the foundational premise that scriptural revelation is constituted by "*signa*" whose reference, or "*res*," is the Triune God.[8] In *De Trinitate*, the first four books

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[6] The most prominent proposals are those put forward by Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," in which the whole work is interpreted as a deliberate failure dramatizing the inadequacy of the Plotinian ascent and Hill (*The Trinity*, 21–27) which finds a chiastic structure that alternates between exegesis and "rational reflections." Hill's proposal is thus simply a redistribution of the faith/reason schema of interpretation.

[7] From a structuralist perspective, meaning is constructed through the play of difference between "binary oppositions," such as light-dark, life-death, male-female, etc. The present study makes use of the notion of "binary oppositions" as an interpretive tool without thereby presuming the whole edifice of structuralist criticism; for some classic examples of the latter, see Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968) and *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974); Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); Robert Schole, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[8] In *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.4ff., Augustine outlines the binary opposition of signs-things: "All teaching is teaching of either things or signs, but things are learnt through signs." (*Saint Augustine. On Christian Teaching*, [trans. R.P.H. Green; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 8). This framework is then immediately aligned with that of use-enjoyment (*uti-frui*): "The things which are to be enjoyed, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity that consists of them, which is a

are largely devoted to scriptural "symbols (*similitudines*)" of divine revelation, while the last eight are concerned with the Trinitarian "image (*imago*)" implanted in human consciousness. Both these categories can be enfolded under the rubric of "*signa*," which refer to the "*res*" of the Triune God and thus the whole work is logically encompassed within the framework of *signa-res*. The proposal offered here is that attentiveness to the ways in which this framework is played out throughout the work will bring to light key elements of the structure, content, and tenor of the theological project of *De Trinitate*. As a demonstration of some of the routes that such an attentiveness might pursue, this paper will first analyse Augustine's description of his own theological method in the first book of *De Trinitate* in order to trace his argumentation for why knowledge of God must necessarily proceed by way of revealed signs; then I will attempt to give an albeit cursory account of how the framework of signs-things structurally governs the contents of the work. Finally, I shall make use of the binary opposition of idol/icon in the work of Jean Luc-Marion in order to characterize the general intent of *De Trinitate* as an attempt to render iconic access to the mystery of God's Trinitarian being.

The Semiotic Method of De Trinitate*: Signs and Things and Faith and Sight*

According to the interpretation offered here, Augustine has outlined the methodological principles of his work exactly where we should expect to find them, in the first chapter of Book 1. By following closely his introductory remarks, we will be in a position to locate the significance of the binary opposition of signs-things for his theological method. Moreover, in so far as the interpretive framework of faith-reason is often read out of these opening remarks, a close reading will enable

kind of single, supreme thing, shared by all who enjoy it …" (1.10, p. 10). *De Doctrina Christiana* was begun in the mid-390s and completed ca. 346 (See C. Kannengiesser, "The Interrupted *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *De Doctrina. A Classic of Western Culture* [ed. Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995], 3–13). *De Trinitate* was begun ca. 400 and completed ca. 420. The most complete account of the dating of *Trin*. is still the classic work of A.-M. La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1965); see also Eugene Teselle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 223–237, 294–309.

us to distinguish it from the framework presented by Augustine himself. Those who would see the binary opposition of faith-reason as determinative for the interpretation of Augustine's project in *De Trinitate* have recourse to the very opening lines of the work, where Augustine cautions: "The reader of these reflections of mine on the Trinity should bear in mind that my pen is on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting-point of faith (*fidei initium*) and allow themselves to be deceived through an unseasonable and misguided love of reason (*perverso rationis amore*)."[9] The first question to ask then is what is meant by the *fidei initium* and how it is distinguished from the "misguided love of reason." Edmund Hill helpfully remarks that this declaration of intention by Augustine needs to be seen "more as a basic principle of method than as a sketch of a plan of contents."[10] But, then, what exactly is this method? Can it be more precisely rendered than by a mere acknowledgement that Augustine always intends to make the contents of faith primary?[11] I believe that a much more precise rendering becomes clear as soon as we note the examples that Augustine immediately proceeds to give as instances of this misguided love of reason and the fundamental exemplar he offers for proper theological inquiry. In his characterization of the theologically wayward, Augustine divides them into three groups: those who transfer knowledge and experience of bodily realities onto God; those who transfer knowledge and experience of created spiritual realities (that is, the human soul) onto God; and those who conceive of God in ways that abstract from both corporeal realities and created spiritual realities but are merely figments of their own imaginations.[12] Indeed, this third group is the most erroneous of all, since what they attribute to God is absolutely false, as being neither true of God nor of anything in creation. Significantly, all three groups are equally charged with intellectual pride: "they block their own road to genuine understanding by asserting too categorically

[9] *Trin.* 1.1.1; Hill, *The Trinity*, 65; CCSL 50:27.

[10] Hill, *The Trinity*, 24.

[11] This is the thrust of the interpretation given by E. Hill: "From the beginning to the end, in his quest for God, he is trying to understand what he believes, and never for one moment does he prescind from what he calls the *initium fidei*, the starting point of faith. Nowhere in the work is he trying to approach the mystery from other premises than those provided by revelation and accepted by faith. Never is he so naive as to think he can 'prove' the mystery without recourse to faith." (Hill, *The Trinity*, 23).

[12] *Trin.* 1.1.1.

their own presumptuous opinions, and then rather than change a misconceived opinion they have defended, they prefer to leave it uncorrected."[13]

It seems then that what all three styles of theological waywardness have in common is the directionality of theological reasoning that begins with the human, whether this be human understanding of sensible reality, of created spiritual reality, or simply "fanciful ideas" generated by the human intellect. What then is the "starting point of faith" (*fidei initium*), which is presented as the corrective counterpoint to such a theologically erroneous posture?[14] The first point to be made is that Augustine immediately signals that such a corrective is found in Scripture. To say this much is merely to confirm Hill's general characterization of the *fidei initium* as a persevering deference to the primacy of scriptural revelation. But what has largely escaped notice is the fact that, for Augustine, the *fidei initium* is not simply a matter of having primary recourse to the *contents* of Scripture but also, and in a way that is crucially determinative for the structure and intention of the work, an appropriation by Augustine of what can fittingly be called the semiotic *method* of Scripture and of divine revelation in general. Indeed, after scorning those who reject the *fidei initium* and characterizing them according to the three categories outlined above, Augustine immediately moves on not to a summary of the contents of scriptural teaching nor to a commitment that he will in fact adhere to these contents, but rather to a characterization of the theological method of Scripture as one that uses creaturely signs to refer to divine realities. Thus, the key difference between the misguided use of reason and the *fidei initium* is that the latter does not attempt to rise up to God by its own initiative but follows the divine initiative which adapts itself to humanity by signifying itself through creaturely signs. This assent to divine self-symbolization induces a purification that allows humanity

[13] Hill, *The Trinity*, 65. R. Kany ("'*Fidei contemnentes initium*': On Certain Positions Opposed by Augustine in *De Trinitate*," StPatr 27 [ed. E.A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters, 1993], 323–328) cites Augustine's correspondence with Dioscorus and Consentius in 410/411 (*Ep.* 117–120) as the background to this passage and suggests that the three positions are to be identified with materialist Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Platonists respectively.

[14] The use of the phrase "*initium fidei*" to designate a principle of theological method in *Trin.* seems distinct from Augustine's customary use of the phrase, in an anti-Pelagian context and post ca. 415, to designate the prevenient grace that enables the act of faith. On the latter usage, see Mariannne Djuth, "*Initium Fidei*," in *Augustine through the Ages* [ed. A. Fitzgerald and J. Cavadini; New York: Eerdmans, 1999], 447–451.

to authentically rise up toward God, transferring its attachment from creation to the Creator. In this way, the implicit framework of signs-things becomes intertwined with another crucial binary opposition, that of divine adaptation-human purification, as well as with the motif of "ascent":

> It was therefore to purify (*purgaretur*) the human spirit of such falsehoods that holy scripture, adapting (*congruens*) itself to babes, did not shun any words, proper to any kind of thing whatever, that might nourish our understanding and enable it to rise (*assurgeret*) to the sublimities of divine things. Thus it would use words taken from corporeal things to speak about God … and from the sphere of created spirit it has transposed many words to signify (*significaret*) what was in fact not like that but had to be expressed like that … The divine scriptures then are in the habit of making something like children's toys out of things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze and get us step by step to seek as best as we can the things that are above and to forsake the things that are below.[15]

It should be noted that the assent of faith is here conceived not merely as a subjective disposition lacking a determinate objective focus but as a purifying adherence to the symbolic regimen of divine adaptations; faith is giving assent to divinely ordained "signs" in order to rise to the divine reality. In this way, the assent of faith has a concrete cognitive and historical dimension.[16] As Augustine continues the exposition of his theological method in Book 1, the binary opposition of (human) purification-(divine) adaptation is complemented by and intertwined with two others: purification-contemplation (*purgatio/contemplatio*) and faith-sight (*fides/visio*). The full attainment of knowledge of God is named "contemplation," which is characterized as a "seeing," while the way to this knowledge through assent to the adaptation of divine mediation is the way of faith, which is characterized as a purification. Thus, the purification by faith, which clings to symbolic "signs," leads to the contemplation of sight, which attains to the divine reality. Moreover, this whole ascending movement is enfolded by the person of Christ:

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[15] 1.1.2; Hill, *The Trinity*, 66; CCSL 50:28–29.

[16] The interpretation offered here is complementary to that of B. Studer ["History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 28 (1997): 7–50] who emphasizes that, for Augustine, "trinitarian faith can be said to constitute a kind of historical knowledge" (10). Studer focuses especially on two christological texts in order to demonstrate this point: *Trin.* 4.15.20–17.24, and 13.1.1–2.5. He does not deal with the methodological program set out by Augustine in Book 1.

> So then it is difficult to contemplate and have full knowledge of (*intueri et plene nosse*) God's substance, which without any change in itself makes things that change and without any passage of time in itself creates things that exist in time. That is why it is necessary for our minds to be purified before that inexpressible reality can be inexpressibly seen by them (*et ideo est necessaria purgatio mentis nostrae qua illud ineffabile ineffabiliter videri possit*); and in order to make us fit and capable of grasping it, we are led along more endurable routes, nurtured on faith as long as we have not yet been endowed with that necessary purification. Thus the apostle indeed says that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ" (Col. 2:3); yet to people who though reborn by this grace are still fleshly and "all too human" like babies in Christ, he presents him not in the divine strength in which he is equal to the Father, but in the human weakness through which he was crucified.[17]

A key constituency to which the polemical intent of *De Trinitate* is directed consisted precisely of those Platonizing Christians who rejected the fundamental principle that knowledge of God is attained only by the purifying assent to the regimen of divine adaptations.[18] Following the passage quoted above, Augustine comments: "when some people are told this they get angry and think they are being insulted."[19] Insofar as the project of *De Trinitate* is conceived as a response to such people, it has the double aim of showing both that the triune God exists and that the full sight and contemplation of this divine reality can only be attained precisely through the scriptural regimen of *signa*, or *similitudines*, which is rejected by these detractors:

> That is why, with the help of the Lord our God, we shall undertake to the best of our ability to give them the explanation (*reddere rationem*) they clamor for, and to account for the one and only and true God being a Trinity, and for the rightness of saying, believing, understanding that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance or essence. In this way, instead of feeling that they have been fobbed off by my excuses, they may actually come to realize (*experiantur*) that supreme goodness does exit, which only the most purified minds can gaze on (*quod purgatissimis mentibus cernitur*) and also that they are themselves unable to gaze upon it and grasp it for the good reason that the human mind with its weak eyesight cannot concentrate on so overwhelming a light, unless it has been nursed back to full vigor on the justice of faith (*per iustitiam fidei nutrita vegetetur*).[20]

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[17] 1.1.3; Hill, *The Trinity* 66–67; CCSL 50:30.
[18] See Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*."
[19] Hill, *The Trinity*, 67.
[20] 1.2.4; Hill, *The Trinity*, 67 (slightly altered). CCSL 50:31.

The rest of Book 1 is preoccupied with dealing with proof-texts used by anti-Nicene "homoians," who deny the full divinity of the Word. In particular, Augustine deals with 1 Cor 15:28, "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." Anti-Nicene homoians had been using this text to assert an end to the reign of Christ as an indication of his inferiority to the Father.[21] In terms of dealing with this text as a difficulty in the establishment of the Trinitarian faith of the Scriptures, Augustine's answer is simple: in handing over the kingdom to the Father, the Son does not deprive himself of it; handing over the kingdom to the Father means bringing humanity to the Father and thereby fulfilling his role as Mediator.[22] But Augustine accomplishes more than the merely defensive move of explaining it in a manner consistent with Nicene orthodoxy. He employs it to move forward in his own theological construction by integrating his interpretation with the key structural motif of the rhetorical interplay of "faith" and "sight," perhaps the most pervasive explicit binary opposition of the entire work. The christological center of this interplay is expressed by the statement that Jesus Christ is the mediator between faith and sight. In light of our previous analysis of these notions, this amounts to saying that Jesus Christ is the mediator between the signs of divine revelation and the reality of divine being:

> What then does it really mean, "When he hands over the kingdom to God and the Father" (1 Cor 15:24), as though at present God and the Father had not got a kingdom? The fact is that "the man Christ Jesus, mediator of God and men" (1 Tim 2:5), now reigning for all "the just who live by faith" (Heb 2:4) is going to bring them to direct sight of God, to the "face to face vision" (1 Cor 13:12), as the apostle calls it (1 Cor 13:12) (*ad speciem quam visionem dicit idem apostolus facie ad faciem*) … when he brings believers to a direct contemplation of God and the Father (*ad contemplationem dei et patres*).[23]

Throughout Book 1, the underlying, albeit implicit, binary opposition of signs-things yields a series of other binary oppositions, all of which evoke the relation between history and eschatology within the divine pedagogy of revelation. Thus the dialectic of faith-sight can also be expressed in terms of hope and sight, for "hope which is seen is not

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[21] See Barnes "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity," esp. 332–336. The text is similarly treated by Augustine in *Diverse Questions*, 69.

[22] A similar treatment, of which Augustine was aware, is to be found in Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin.* 11.39–40.

[23] 1.8.16; Hill, *The Trinity*, 76; CCSL 50:49.

hope" (2 Cor 5:6).[24] We have already seen the same dialectic articulated in terms of purification-contemplation, an articulation that is extended into that of action-contemplation and action-rest, with all of these converging around another key structural motif that is prominent throughout Augustine's theology, that of use-enjoyment (*uti-frui*): "For the fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy the triune God in whose image we were made (*frui trinitate deo ad cuius imaginem facti sumus*)."[25]

From their inception in the opening book, all these structural pairs are consistently related to the person and career of Christ and define the crucial demarcation within the christological drama of salvation.[26] The time of faith-hope-purification-action-"seeing through a mirror, in a puzzle" (1 Cor 13:12) is the time following the ascension. The time of sight-contemplation-rest-enjoyment is the time when Christ "appears" (*apparuerit*) as our true life, in the glory of his divinity that is shared by the Father and the Spirit. (cf. Col. 3:3). These binary oppositions, then, are used simultaneously to designate the relation of (salvation) history to the eschaton and to refer to distinct phases in the career of Christ, thereby enfolding history and eschatology into the christological drama.

This enfolding finds another key expression when it is directly applied to the person of Christ through the structural pair of *forma servi-forma dei* (the form of a servant-the form of God). Again, this dialectic is referred to that of faith-sight and to two kinds of christological "sights": Christ was once visible to humanity with respect to the *forma servi*, but he will once again become visible to the blessed with respect to the *forma dei*, in which he "will be seen in his equality with the Father, that being the ultimate vision which suffices us."[27] Faith in the *forma servi* thus leads to the sight of the *forma dei*. While the dialectic that is being articulated by these binary oppositions expresses a christological inter-

[24] *Trin.* 1.8.17.

[25] *Trin.* 10, 20.

[26] An excellent treatment of the dialectic of faith and visibility/invisibility, situated within its anti-homoian context, is found in Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity." Barnes' treatment tends rather to stress the disjunction between faith and (historical) sight, making the negative counterpoint to Studer's emphasis on the anchoring of faith in historical knowledge. On the dramatic character of Augustine's christology, see Ayres, "The Christological Context of Augustine's *De Trinitiate* XIII," esp. 119–120.

[27] 1.8.18; Hill, *The Trinity*, 78.

pretation of history, it is also and simultaneously a way of signifying a christological epistemology. The precise shape of this epistemology can only be fully appreciated if we trace carefully the complexity of Augustine's use of these motifs in their reference to the person and career of Christ. As a central case in point, we can take the example of the motif of faith-sight. On the face of it, Book 1 of *De Trinitate* seems to articulate a direct opposition between faith and sight, anchored around the recurring refrain of the biblical verse, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor 5:6). But a strict opposition would entail a complete disjunction between historical revelation and eschatological vision. Moreover, a faith without any kind of "sight" would amount to the Neoplatonic project of attempting to rise to divine reality by abstracting from all creaturely "signs." But, in fact, the structural interplay within the dialectic of faith-sight is more complex than that of a simple opposition. Perhaps the shortest way to get to the heart of this complexity is to trace the patterns of Augustine's rhetorical play, and we are thereby led to note that while there is a clear dialectic between faith and sight, *both sides* of this dialectic are aligned with the language of "sight": "faith" and "sight" are thus more like two different kinds of seeing than sheer opposites. This distinction within a continuum is rendered by Augustine in biblical terms when he distinguishes between "seeing in mirror" and "seeing face to face."[28] But it is in direct reference to the person and career of Christ and with special reference to the Incarnation that the complexity of the matter finds its most pertinent expression. The complexity is such that Augustine has much room to exercise his penchant for verbal paradox: the visible Christ (that is, what we call "the Christ of history") is and is not the object of "sight." He is the object of sight, by definition, since we are speaking of the "visible" Christ. But he is not the object of the "*visio*" of contemplation. The paradox can just as well be rendered with reference to the correlative category of "faith" in a way that once again aligns the motif of faith-sight with that of purification-contemplation. Thus, Augustine takes a snippet from John's gospel, "He who believes in me does not believe in me . . ." (John 12:44) and renders its meaning thus: "He who believes in me does not believe in what he sees (*non in hoc quod videt credit*) . . . or our hope would in that case be in something created but he believes in him who takes a created form in which to appear to human eyes, and thereby to purify

[28] cf. 1.8.16.

(*mundaret*) our minds for contemplating him by faith in his equality with the Father (*ad se aequalem patri contemplandum per fidem*)."[29]

How then can we make sense of these paradoxical statements? We can make a beginning by saying that clearly part of the complexity has to do with a double signification attributed to the language of "sight": historical sight and eschatological sight. But even though we can logically reduce the matter to a mere equivocality, that does not get us far in retrieving Augustine's motivation in *choosing* to structure the matter in such equivocal terms. One of the effects created by this decision, one that was presumably intended by Augustine, is to thereby assert precisely the *continuity within difference* between one side of the various structural pairs and the other. Faith leads to sight, purification to contemplation, action to rest, proper use to enjoyment, within a single organically unified and integral movement. But even more than an order of succession between different moments, there is also a measure of significant interpenetration. This interpenetration is manifest within the notion of "*similitudines*," the "signs" of revelation that occupy Augustine's attention in the first three books. A *similitudo* is a historical "sight" that attracts faith and thereby leads the believer to eschatological "sight." A *similitudo* therefore is both sight and not sight; this is to say that it is a *referential* sight—a *signa*. As presented in the opening books of *De Trinitate*, faith is precisely the assent to the referentiality of the *similitudines*, as these are portrayed in the Scriptures and interpreted by the Church. The christological epistemology constructed in Book 1 of *De Trinitate* has as its fundamental principle the assertion that this referentiality becomes fully realized in Christ: The visible Christ, who is the object of the "sight" of faith leads us to the invisible Christ, who is the object of the sight of contemplation. And if faith leads to sight, purification to contemplation, action to rest, and proper use to enjoyment, it is ultimately because the *forma servi* who is correlated to the first item in these pairs is "one and the same (*idem ipse*)"[30] as the "*forma dei*" who is correlated to the second.[31] Augustine focuses on the ascension of Christ

[29] 1.12.27; Hill, *The Trinity*, 86; CCSL 50:68.

[30] 1.13.28.

[31] The continuity—albeit not without difference—between historical knowledge and eschatological vision, which is ultimately anchored in the unity of person within the two natures of Christ, is an emphasis that needs to complement Barnes' stress on the *difference* between faith and historical sight/knowledge: "While under the *form of servant* the Son does not reveal God or divinity as direct knowledge: while incarnated the Son reveals God or divinity only through the instrumentality of faith, which not being

as the event which signals for us Christ's role in mediating our own ascent from the sights of faith to eschatological vision. Christ ascended in order to withdraw his corporeal visibility from us, thereby initiating us into the knowledge that his human visibility was a reference to his divine invisibility which is "the ultimate vision that suffices for us."[32] True faith in Christ, then, is precisely a matter of seeing the *referentiality* of the *forma servi* of Christ to the *forma dei*. The vision of the latter will be a truly Trinitarian vision and an indwelling of the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit.

By the end of Book 1, the key principles of Augustine's methodology and the key rhetorical motifs by which he will express his theological vision in *De Trinitate* are thus well established. The foundational principle is that of the necessarily symbolic or semiotic nature of revelation. Knowledge of God is only accessible to us through divine adaptation to our creaturely perception through created means or "signs." A whole series of rhetorical motifs are used to express the dialectical relation between the "signs" of revelation and the divine "things" to which they refer. Most prominent is the binary opposition of faith and sight, but correlated to that are others, such as: hope and sight; purification and

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a kind of seeing is not 'knowledge' in the sense that Augustine normally uses that word" (Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity," 334). While this is true, according to one aspect of Augustine's use of these terms, it should also be kept in mind that what makes the Incarnation the supreme point of divine revelation, for Augustine, is precisely that it is the event wherein the historical "sight" offered to faith (that is, the *forma servi*) partakes of "one and the same" reality as the eschatological sight to which this vision of faith refers (*forma dei*). To make this point, Augustine speaks of the Incarnation as the event which averts the "clash" between historical faith and eternal truth, for "it would not do for there to be one person for us in faith, another in truth (*ne alter nobis esset in fide, alter in veritate*)." (1.18.24; Hill, *The Trinity*, 170; CCSL 50:192) Moreover, while faith may be properly differentiated from "seeing" and "knowledge," according to one aspect of the faith-sight dialectic, we have seen that Christian faith also requires seeing and that is precisely what differentiates Christian faith from the Neoplatonic program. Thus, in *Trin.* 13, faith is in fact correlated with "knowledge": "But all these things that the Word made flesh did and suffered for us in time and space belong, according to the distinction we have undertaken to illustrate, to knowledge (*ad scientiam pertinent*) and not to wisdom … Our knowledge therefore is Christ and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things." (13.19.24; Hill, *The Trinity*, 362–363; CCSL 50A:415). Perhaps the essential point is that the opposition between "faith" and "knowledge" needs to be seen in light of the framework of signs-things: faith is not simply other than sight and knowledge but is the ascent from the sight and knowledge of *signs* to the sight and knowledge of the *things* to which these signs refer.

[32] 1.8.18.

contemplation; use and enjoyment. Such binary oppositions express a dialectic that is at once a principle of theological method, a conception of history as it relates to eschatology, a christological epistemology and a reading of the christological drama of salvation. It is a dialectic that, as we have seen, is encompassed by the person and work of Christ. We can now proceed to a general overview of the structure of *De Trinitate* as it relates to this dialectic. It will be seen that Augustine's project throughout is to discern the divinely ordained signs whose reference to divine reality is only accomplished through Christ.

A Reading of the Semiotic Structure of De Trinitate*:*

Books 1–4: Christ as the Fulfillment of Divine Signs

After outlining the key principles of his method in Book 1, Augustine's concern is to deal with the "homoian" premise that the Old Testament theophanies, which had traditionally been taken to be manifestations of the *Logos*/Son, were indications of his inferior divinity. Both the assumption that these theophanies were appearances of the Word who was to become incarnate and the understanding that such appearances were an indication of his secondary transcendence were traditional *typoi* prior to the Council of Nicaea. After Nicene doctrine expressly repudiated the latter assumption, the correlation between the Word's susceptibility to visibility and his secondary transcendence needed to be deconstructed. The opening books of *De Trinitate* engage this project by demythologizing the Old Testament appearances within the framework of Augustine's symbolic theology. The key move is to assert that these theophanies are merely "signs" or "*similitudines*," rather than immediate manifestations of the divine persons. First, Augustine enquires as to whether these appearances are representations of Father, Son, Spirit, or all three together; then, he investigates whether they are appearances of angels or representations created simply for the occasion.[33] In the first move, his enquiry is concerned with the "thing/*res*" signified by the signs, while the second order of enquiry is an investigation of the *res* of the signs themselves. In the first case, he concludes it is simply not clear which of the persons the theophanies represent, or

[33] 2.7.13.

whether it is the whole Trinity together;[34] and, in the second, that they are likely appearances of angels.[35] But the key contribution that Augustine makes to the discussion is not so much to offer a definite answer to either of these questions, but rather simply to assert the *difference* between sign and signified, and precisely by doing so, to deconstruct the "homoian" correlation between the visible signs and the attenuated transcendence and secondary divinity of the Word. The distance, as well as the relation, between the signs of the theophanies and the "*res*" of the Triune reality are articulated in large part through the complex dialectic of the binary opposition of faith and sight: The Old Testament theophanies are "sights" that accommodate divine reality to creaturely perception; if accepted in faith, they will refer believers to the invisible "sight" of the contemplation of the triune God. The attainment of eschatological "sight" demands the purification of faith that is accomplished by adhering to the historical "sights" of revelation.

Aside from this critical project of demythologizing the Old Testament theophanies, Augustine spends time in the first three books showing that the language used by the Scriptures to refer to Son and Spirit ascribe full divinity to both. In the case of the Son, he also has to deal with scriptural language that clearly ascribes a creaturely status to the Son and which formed the arsenal of his "homoian" opponents. He deals with these by explaining that the christological narrative of the Scriptures represents the twofold manifestation of the Son, in the form of a servant (*forma servi*) and in the form of God (*forma dei*). The fullness of this twofold manifestation occurs in the Incarnation of the Word, which is treated in Book 4. The christological center of the signs-things structural framework can be expressed by saying that Jesus Christ is the unique locus where the adaptive signs of divine self-disclosure form a complete unity with the signified reference of divine reality such that sign and signified are "one and the same."[36] As such, Jesus Christ represents the consummation and goal of the whole "regime of symbols"[37] which constitute the program of adaptive divine self-revelation: "all the sacred and mystical things that were shown to our fathers … were likenesses of him (*sunt similitudines huius*) so that all creation might speak

[34] 3. *Prooem.* 3.
[35] 3.10.27.
[36] 1.13.28.
[37] 1.18.16.

the one who was to come and be the savior of all who needed to be restored from death."[38] As the one who is both sign and signified, Jesus Christ encompasses both sides of the dialectic of "faith" and "sight," as well as both sides of the other "oppositional pairs" that are correlative to it. Thus, in another characteristic passage, the dialectic of faith-sight is paired with purification-contemplation, while that of use-enjoyment is intimated. All these are enfolded within the unity of the person and work of Christ, who is "the one in whom we have been purified by faith (*per fidem mundati*) and will then be made completely whole by sight (*per speciem redintegrati*), and that thus fully reconciled to God by him the mediator, we may be able to cling to the one, enjoy (*fruamur*) the one, and remain for ever one."[39]

That Jesus Christ is the object of both the visible sight by which we are purified through faith and the invisible sight that is enjoyed by contemplation is precisely what sets Christian faith apart from the Plotinian ascent, or *exercitatio*. In line with Cavidini's reading, we can note the anti-Plotinian polemic embedded in Augustine's theological argument.[40] But instead of understanding that argument merely as a deliberate failure to attain to the vision of God, we should see it as a positive affirmation of the pedagogy of Christian revelation in which God in Christ accommodates himself to our temporal and corporeal nature in order to lead us from the signs and "sights" adapted to our temporality to the eternal and incorporeal sight of his divinity. The Platonists indeed can attain to some fleeting and distant sight of the divine but they lack the purification of faith which is accomplished by adhering to the historical sights of revelation and which leads to the secure dwelling in and enjoyment of the vision of God.[41] They can see the goal to be reached but lack the way to arrive at that destination, whereas ultimately, the secure attainment of the invisible vision of God depends less on fleeting glimpses of the sight of divine reality than on the attachment by faith to the historical sights of divine adaptation. By contrast, the divine pedagogy is one that enables us to reach to the sight of the invisible by the training and purification provided by the historical sights that culminate in the vision of the God-man:

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[38] 4.7.11; Hill, *The Trinity*, 160 (slightly altered); CCSL 50:175.
[39] 4.7.11; Hill, *The Trinity* 161; CCSL 50:176.
[40] Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*."
[41] 4.15.20.

> To sum up then: we were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things … so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means like those we were already bound to in a servile adaptation…Now just as the rational mind is meant, once purified, to contemplate eternal things, so it is meant while still needing purification to give faith to temporal things.[42]

Once again, it is precisely because of the unity of humanity and divinity in Christ that temporal and historical faith, and the knowledge gained thereby, are not discontinuous with the eternal contemplation of God that awaits humanity. In Christ, humanity's historical attachment to God through faith is unified—within a certain dialectical difference in form, it is nevertheless "one and the same"—with the eternal vision which awaits us:

> So now we accord faith to the things done in time for our sakes, and are purified by it; in order that when we come to sight and truth succeeds to faith, eternity might likewise succeed to mortality. Our faith will then become truth … therefore when our faith becomes truth by seeing, our mortality will be transformed into a fixed and firm eternity. Now until this happens and in order that it may happen, and to prevent the faith which we accord with all trust in this mortal life to things "that have originated" from clashing with the truth of contemplating eternal things which we hope for in eternal life, truth itself, co-eternal with the Father, "originated from the earth" (Ps. 85:12) when the Son of God came in order to become the Son of man and to capture our faith and draw it to himself, and by means of it to lead us on to his truth; for he took our mortality in such a way that he did not lose his own eternity … So it was proper for us to be purified in such a way that he who remained eternal should become for us "originated"; it would not do for there to be one person for us in faith, another in truth. Nor, on the other hand, could we pass from being among the things originated to eternal things, unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition, and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.[43]

Books 5–7: The Ecclesial Definition of the res *of the Divine Trinity*

Traditional interpretations of *De Trinitate* tend to designate Books 5–7 as inaugrating the transition from scriptural exegesis to reasoned, or

[42] 4.18.24; Hill, *The Trinity*, 169. Note here the correlation of the binary oppositions of purification-contemplation, time-eternity and, implicitly, faith-sight.

[43] Hill, *The Trinity*, 169–170.

"speculative" argument.[44] Among other problems, this characterization fails to account for the fact that the primary burden of Books 6 and 7 is the exegesis of 1 Cor 1:24, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." In terms of our scheme, it is more helpful to see Book 5 rather as inaugrating a transition from *signa* to *res*. Such a transition, which is in effect one from economy to theology, recapitulates the historical trajectory which culminates in Nicaea and Constantinople with the credal confessions of the trinitarian being of the one God. While this ecclesial confession was based on an analysis of the divine economy akin to the analysis of Books 1–4, it does result in affirmations of faith that pertain to the *res* of the divine being itself. Books 5–7 primarily deal with two issues that bear on the question of how to properly conceive the Trinitarian being of God. The first is the anti-Nicene argument that if the distinctions between the persons cannot be conceived as "accidents," since there are no accidents in the divine being, they must pertain to substance; thus Father, Son, and Spirit are different substances. The second is concerned with the proper interpretation of 1 Cor 1:24, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," and enquires as to whether that statement should be understood in such a way as to connote that the Father (and, *mutatis mutandis*, the Spirit) is not in himself, "taken singly," also power and wisdom but rather that the Father's power and wisdom is simply the Son. It is significant that Augustine begins his consideration of these issues that pertain directly to divine ontology by reiterating the symbolic principle that undergirds the logic of the whole work. He insists that it is not possible to grasp God as an intelligible object that is commensurate with the content of our thought: "From now on I will be attempting to say things that cannot altogether be said as they are thought by a man—or at least as they are thought by me. In any case, when we think about God the Trinity we are aware that our thoughts are quite inadequate to their object and incapable of grasping him as he is; even by men of the calibre of the apostle Paul he can only be seen, as it says, 'like a puzzling reflection in a mirror'" (1 Cor 13:12).[45] Just as the demythologization project of

[44] Thus, E. Hendrikx, in the Bibliothèque Augustinienne edition, designates Bks. 1–4 as providing a scriptural demonstration of Trinitarian faith, while Bks. 5–15 attempt a "speculative" explication: *La Trinité: Livres I–VII*, (Bibliothèque Augustinienne; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 17–18. Similiarly, Hill: "In Books V–VII Augustine turns to giving rational arguments in support of this faith" (*The Trinity*, 23).

[45] 5.1.1; Hill, *The Trinity*, 189.

the first four books established that the reality of God cannot be seen directly but only through the mediation of creaturely "sights" that are incommensurate with the *res* which they signify, so here it is insisted upon that the same incommensurability obtains with regard to our creaturely thoughts about God. With regard to the issue at hand, this principle indicates that the reality of the Triune God cannot be subjected to the Aristotelian logic of accidental predication which applies to material realities. Similiarly to the Cappadocians, Augustine insists that the integrity of the scriptural data is only preserved by affirming that the distinction between Father and Son pertains neither to substance nor to accident, but rather to the relations between the persons.[46]

In Book 6, Augustine turns to the polemical use of 1 Cor 1:24, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," which has been used both to affirm the inequality of Father and Son among anti-Nicenes, as well as their necessary co-existence among Nicenes. Augustine faults both usages insofar as they presume that the Son is the Father's Wisdom in such a way that the Father is Wisdom only through the Son and not in himself.[47] His subsequent argumentation, based on a carefully reasoned consideration of pertinent scriptural texts, leads to the conclusion that all three persons are power and wisdom, both singly and together, such that, for example, the Son is begotten Wisdom and the Father is begetting Wisdom. The point of spending time and laborious argument on this issue is that it concerns the central point of the interrelation or *circumencessio* (*perichoresis*) of the three persons, though these terms are not used explicitly by Augustine. If the Son is Wisdom while the Father, taken "singly" and in himself, is not, then there is a certain heterogeneity and portioning of the divine essence and attributes. Augustine's handling of both the issues taken up in Books 5–7 leads to the affirmation of the perfect mutuality of the persons: "each in each and all in each and each in all and all in all and all are one."[48] This is really Augustine's central insight into the mystery of the *res* of the divine Trinity—that there are three distinct entities between whom there is a perfect mutual indwelling.

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[46] Cf. Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 29; on the similiarity between Augustine's apophaticism and that of the Cappadocians, see F. Courth, *Trinität in der Schrift und Patristik.* (Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte II/Ia; Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 207.

[47] 6.1.

[48] 6.10.12; Hill, *The Trinity*, 214.

Books 8–11: The Search for the signa *of Trinitarian mutuality*

Within the framework of an interpretation that sees the latter half of *De Trinitate* as the movement of faith into reason, Books 8–10 are typically seen as engaged in the effort to come to a knowledge of the Triune God through the structure of individual consciousness.[49] Such a reading leaves Augustine vulnerable to the charge of solipsism and to reducing the mystery of the Trinity to the measure of an individualistic anthropocentrism. But a reading that is attentive to the structural centrality of the implied framework of "*signa-res*" enables us to perceive the crucial point that what is at stake in the search for the image of the Trinity in human consciousness is not so much an *objective knowledge* of the structure of the Triune God but rather an intelligible point of reference that would enable the reader to *refer* herself to the Triune God. In other terms, what is searched for is not the *res*, as it were, of knowledge of the Trinity, but precisely a *signa* by which the person can orient herself to the *res* of the divine being, even while that *res* is not fully in view and is in fact clearly acknowledged to be well beyond the circumscribed grasp of the human intellect. On the basis of the reflections of Books 5–7, what is looked for is a *signa* that can reflect, however dimly, the inseparability and perfect mutuality of the *circumencessio* of the Triune God. On the basis of the biblical doctrine that the human person is *imago dei*, Augustine is going to look for this *signa* in human consciousness. Moreover, the necessity for perceiving such a *signa* arises not as a supplement to faith but as completely intrinsic to the dynamic of faith. In its subjective aspect, faith can be understood as the act by which the person refers herself to God in love: "We must first love by faith or it will be impossible for our hearts to be purified and become fit and worthy to see him." But, Augustine insists, such a referring of the self to God in love requires some intelligible content: "For since 'we are still walking by faith and not by sight' (2 Cor 5:7) we do not yet see God, as the same apostle says, 'face to face' (1 Cor 13:12). Yet unless we love him even now, we shall never see him. But who can love what he does not know?"[50] Therefore, knowledge is needed precisely to guard and orient the movement of love:

[49] See Hill, *The Trinity*, 24; P. Abaëgesse, *La Trinité: Livres VIII–XV* (Bibliothèque Augustinienne; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 19.

[50] 8.4.6; Hill, *The Trinity*, 246.

> So then, since we desire to understand as far as it is given us the eternity and equality and unity of the Trinity, and since we must believe before we can understand, we must take care our faith is not fabricated. This is the Trinity we are to enjoy in order to live in bliss; but if we have false beliefs about it our hope is vain and our charity is not chaste. How then are we to love by believing this Trinity, which we do not know?[51]

The question then is not: what knowledge of the Trinity can we attain? Rather, it is: what knowledge can inform our love for that Trinity which we cannot encompass by mere knowledge? In terms of Augustine's own framwork of faith-sight, in which the symbolic sights of faith (that is, *signa*) refer us to the invisible *res* of eschatological sight, he is seeking a vision that belongs to the referential sights of faith which structure our ascent to God, and not some miniature duplication, as it were, of the eschatological sight of God. According to Augustine, the distinctive obstacle in finding an intelligible orientation by which the believer can refer himself to the Triune God is that the perfect mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian persons cannot be grasped by "general and specific notions" that are part of our experience. If it could be found at all, such understanding by which faith orients itself would have to be symbolic: "What we are asking, though, is from what likeness or comparison of things known to us we are able to believe, so that we may love the as yet unknown God (*Sed ex qua rerum notarum similitudine vel comparatione credamus quo etiam nondum notum deum diligamus, hoc quaeritur*)."[52] What follows in Books 8 to 10 is surely some of the most complex material of the entire work. The complexity has to do not only with the deep concentration of introspection that Augustine demands of the reader but perhaps even more with the difficulty that attends the effort to synthesize the various seemingly unrelated turns of Augustine's argument. If he is ultimately concerned with the innate triadic structure of individual consciousness, why does he begin with the presence of God to consciousness in the experiences of truth and goodness, in Book 8? Or, what are we to make of Augustine's preoccupation with the aporias of self-consciousness in Book 10, the seemingly contradictory affirmations that, on the one hand, the mind necessarily knows and loves itself and, on the other hand, the mind is often incognizant of itself and in search of itself?

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[51] 8.5.8; Hill, *The Trinity*, 247.
[52] 8.5.8; Hill, *The Trinity*, 248; CCSL 50A:279.

Within the framework presented here, these questions can be clarified by the distinction between the sign as itself a *res* and as signifying another *res*.[53] This distinction makes intelligible Augustine's alternations, which can sometimes seem like digressions, between focusing on the innate triadic structure of human consciousness (its triadic *res*) and on the grounds and adventures of its capacity or failure to actually refer itself to the Triune God (*qua signa*). Keeping this in mind, it is significant that Augustine does not begin directly with the innate triadic structure of human consciousness but rather with its transitive reference to God.[54] The opening of Book 8, with its meditation on the presence of God to human consciousness in its basic acts of recognizing and clinging to truth and goodness, establishes the point that God is the innate referent of the human mind in its most radical operations. It is only within this context of the mind's innate reference to God that Augustine moves on to an exploration of the triadic structure of the mind itself as a *res*. The question of how to integrate Augustine's demonstration of the mind's ineluctable operations of self-understanding and self-loving with his dramatization of the experience of the self-estrangement of "not knowing oneself" and "searching for oneself" can be similiarly illumined by reference to the same distinction. It is a matter of distinguishing between the mind's innate structure and its experience of referring—that is, between the "*res*" of the mind and its referential performance as a "*signa*." Augustine wants to insist that, as regards its innate structure, the mind is a triad of memory, understanding, and will and that it exists simply by understanding and loving itself.[55] As

[53] *De Doctrina Christiana* 1.2.2.

[54] This immediately signals that Augustine is not engaged in the proto-Cartesian project of grounding all certain knowledge within an individual consciousness. For an insightful reading of Bks. 8–10 that deals with this charge, see R. Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate*" in *Augustine. Presbyter Factus Sum* (ed. J. Lienhard, E. Muller, and R. Teske; Collectanea Augustiniana; New York: Peter Lang, 1993). Williams stresses the point that the self-knowledge sought by Augustine is not an objective knowledge: "And this self-reflection likewise cannot be the perception of mind itself as object; it exists only as an awareness of the mind's working, the mind's movement. This movement in turn is only intelligible as the movement of desire" (122). I am trying to make a similiar point by saying that Augustine is not trying to locate knowledge of the Triune God in the *res* of human consciousness but rather to discern how the structure of human consciousness can signify the presence of the Triune God and thus structure the mind's ascent to this reality.

[55] See J. Brachtendorff, "'*Prius esse cogitare quam credere*' A Natural Understanding of 'Trinity' in St. Augustine?" *Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998): 35–45.

such, human consciousness is indeed constituted by a triadic structure which manifests, in some measure, the traits of inseparability and mutual indwelling that are confessed by faith to belong to the Triune God. Yet this triadic mutual indwelling, which is manifest in the mind's radical operations of self-understanding and self-love can become "lost" and forgotten if the mind does not refer itself appropriately, by making use (*uti*) of creaturely realities in order to enjoy (*frui*) God:

> And if the greater part of our will is not dwelling amid higher and more inward things and if that part of it which is applied to bodies outside or to their images inside does not refer (*referat*) whatever it fixes on in them to the better and truer life, and does not rest (*adquiescat*) in that end … what else are we doing but what the apostle forbids us to do: "Do not be conformed to this age."[56]

It becomes clear at this point that the mind's appropriation of its own intrinsic *res* is strictly dependent on how it functions in its transitive acts of referring itself outwards. Ethics is integral to Augustine's presentation of the ontology of the human person in a way that renders the charge of solipsism unwarranted.[57] Books 8–11 are concerned with showing both the triadic *res* of human consciousness as well as the mysterious self-estrangement that is consequent on the mind's misdirection, when it fails to enact its proper role as *signa*, or "image" of God.

Books 12–14: Reconstructing the Imago *in Christ*

In Book 12, Augustine distinguishes between two modes by which the mind refers itself to external realities: "knowledge, *scientia*" and "wisdom, *sapientia*." The former is the realm of the mind's concern with temporal things while the latter is that of the mind's immersion in divine reality. Only in the latter activity does the mind fulfill its role as *imago dei*.[58] In Book 13, the oppositional pair of knowledge-wisdom is integrated with that of faith-sight. In one sense, faith is the clinging to realities that cannot be seen: "faith is needed by which to believe what cannot be seen."[59] And yet, as we have noted, the complexity of the framework of faith and sight is such that faith is not simply the

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[56] 11.5.8; Hill, *The Trinity*, 310; CCSL 50A:344.
[57] See, again, R. Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate*."
[58] 12.4.4.
[59] 13.1.2; Hill, *The Trinity*, 343.

realm of the invisible, but rather the orientation to invisible realities through adherence to visible signs that refer to these invisible realities. Consequently, faith is not simply the realm of the unintelligible and completely intangible, but is identified with "knowledge, *scientia*." It is knowledge, however, in the mode of the sign, which is to say that it informs the intellect by referring it to something else which is signified. Knowledge thus leads to wisdom, which coincides with the sight of eternal divine realities. At this point, we return neatly to the theme of the christological enfolding of our access to God that was dramatized in Book 4. Just as the Incarnate Word recapitulates and brings to fulfillment all the signs and "sights" that lead us to faith and at the same time is himself in his divinity the invisible sight that is the object of eschatological contemplation, so is he also the object and total content of both knowledge and wisdom. It is he who finally enables all the signs of the divine economy, including the trinitarian image of God in humanity, to actually refer to God:

> Among things that have arisen in time the supreme grace is that man has been joined to God to form one person; among eternal things the supreme truth is rightly attributed to the Word of God. That the only begotten from the Father is the one who is full of grace and truth means that it is one and the same person by whom deeds were carried out in time for us and for whom we are purified by faith in order that we many contemplate him unchangingly in eternity … Our knowledge therefore is Christ and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:1).[60]

In Book 14, Augustine signals that he is coming to a concluding statement on what exactly is the Trinitarian image in humanity. But his conclusions are once again paradoxical. On the one hand, he seems to assert that the mind is the image of God in its remembering, understanding, and loving itself: "But first of all the mind must be considered in itself and God's image discovered in it before it participates in him … For we have said that even when it has lost its participation in him it still remains the image of God, even though worn out and distorted. It is his image in so far as it is capable of him and can participate in him

[60] 13.19.24; Hill, *The Trinity*, 363–364.

(*eo quippe ipso imago eius est quo eius capax est eiusque esse particeps posse*)."[61] On the other hand, Augustine insists that the mind is only the image of God by remembering, understanding and loving God: "This Trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made."[62] In resolving this paradox, the framework of *signa-res* is again helpful. There are two dimensions to the mind being in the image of God: one is its intrinsic structure and its objective capacity to refer itself to God—this is its "*res*"; the other is its actual referring of itself to God, which is here spoken of as "participation" and which constitutes "wisdom"—this is the actualization of its "*res*" precisely as *signa*, or *imago*. The mind is the image of God both fundamentally in its intrinsic structure and then fully according to its participation in God. The first feature persists even despite human sinfulness; the second will only achieve its fulfillment in the eschatological vision. This fulfillment is here identified as "wisdom"; correlatively, the apprehension of the mind's innate triadic structure can be taken to belong to the realm of knowledge. The movement from apprehending the knowledge of the mind's innate triadic structure to attaining the wisdom of its contemplation of God constitutes the "reformation" of the image, which takes place in Christ, when we are "justified by his blood."[63] Just as Christ is the "Mediator" between the signs, or *similitudines*, of divine revelation and the reality of the Triune God, so he is the Mediator between this reality and the sign of the Trinitarian image in humanity. In both cases, the signs refer only through the person and work of Christ, who unites in his person signs and signified.

Book 15: The Dialectic of the Sign

Book 15 is often taken as evidence that Augustine himself acknowledged the failure of his own quest to seek a Trinitarian image of God in human consciousness.[64] This interpretation is based on Augustine's

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[61] 14.8.11; Hill, *The Trinity*, 379.
[62] 14.11.15; Hill, *The Trinity*, 383.
[63] 13.16.21.
[64] The classic exposition of this view is A. Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), esp. 215–216; Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," takes a similiar view.

emphasis in the last book on the unlikeness between the triadic structure of human consciousness and the divine Trinity itself, an emphasis which is considered to bear all the more weight given the likelihood that the last book of the work also belongs to the last stage of composition.[65] Yet, despite the apophatic emphasis of Book 15, Augustine by no means repudiates the whole project of searching for a Trinitarian image of God in humanity. In fact, he summarizes the ways in which this project has yielded positive results in the previous course of the work. He asserts that just as human consciousness is constituted through self-knowledge and self-love, so God also cannot be thought to be lacking these.[66] The one who can see "the inner word" that proceeds from the mind "can already see through this mirror and in this enigma some likeness of that Word."[67] When the human inner word becomes embodied in sound, we have a likeness of the Incarnation of the Word.[68] It is only in tandem with such elements of genuine likeness, and not as a simple refutation of them, that Augustine insists nevertheless on the real unlikeness between human image and divine Trinity. The reader is counseled "to note how great the dissimilarity is in whatever similarity there may be."[69] Most fundamentally, there is the difference that the triadic structure of human consciousness belongs to the human person but does not simply coincide with the whole of the human person, while Trinity is not something in God but simply what God is.[70]

Moreover, there is the "enormous difference" that each of the triadic elements of human consciousness (memory, intellect, will) performs a unique function, while in the divine Trinity the inter-relation is such that the divine acts of self-knowledge and self-love are not performed by one of the persons distinctly but by all inseparably.[71]

Thus a balanced reading of the work mitigates against interpretations which understand Augustine as either merely positing an equivalence between the triadic human image and the divine Trinity or as

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[65] Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," 111, n. 3.

[66] "An haec sapientia quae deus dicitur no se intellegit, non se diligit? Quis hoc dixerit?" 15.7.10; CCSL 50A:474.

[67] 15.10.19; Hill, *The Trinity*, 409.

[68] 15.11.20.

[69] 15.20.39; Hill, *The Trinity*, 426.

[70] 15.7.11; 15.14.23.

[71] 15.7.12.

completely denying the likeness between them.[72] The last book of *De Trinitate* is at pains to assert simultaneously both likeness and unlikeness: "such a great unlikeness to God and his Word in this puzzle though at the same time a genuine likeness."[73] Again, the crucial point is to see how Augustine's search for a "sign" is distinct from an attempt to simply grasp some "objective knowledge," a noetic *res*, as it were. In the latter case, the question is likely to be reduced to whether such knowledge is accurate or inaccurate, in the sense of somehow presenting a miniature duplicate of the divine reality. But in the search for a sign, the knowledge at issue is mediated precisely by the dialectical relation between likeness and unlikeness. As Augustine himself puts it, the point is to see the image precisely as image, as referring to something beyond itself.[74] Moreover, this dialectical knowledge is always enfolded by the movement of faith, which appropriates the likeness in order to direct the mind toward the triune God and acknowledges the difference as something that partly arises from the disparity in natures, but is also largely due to the stain of sin. Thus, recognizing the disparity and obscurity of the image is not merely a matter of making an epistemological adjustment but a call to conversion, purification, and a reliance on the redemption that comes from the one who represents in his person the way from image to reality. It is through Jesus Christ that the triadic image may be "used" as a means for "enjoying" the divine Trinity.[75]

Conclusion: The Sign, the Icon, and the Idol: Augustine and Marion

Having outlined a reading of the argument of *De Trinitate* in terms of the motif of the "sign," we can now articulate the interpretive value of attentiveness to this motif by recourse to the reflections of Jean-Luc Marion on the idol and the icon.[76] For Marion, the distinction is

[72] We have noted that Schindler is the classic spokesperson of the latter view. On the other hand, it is too much to speak of "the mind's structural equivalents to the triune God," as does Brachtendorff ("*prius esse cogitare quam credere*," 44, 45).

[73] 15.16.26; Hill, *The Trinity*, 417: quamobrem cum tanta sit nunc in isto aenigmate dissimilitudo dei et verbi dei in qua tamen nonulla similitudo comperta est … (CCSL 50A:500).

[74] 15.22.42.

[75] 15.23.44.

[76] I am indebted to M. Barnes for the suggestion of the association of Augustine and Marion. Barnes finds an echo of Augustine in Marion's conception that Christians will

finally between "two modes of apprehension of the divine in visibility."[77] To return to the vocabulary of structuralist analysis, we find Marion employing two other "binary oppositions" for articulating the distinction between idol and icon, both of which have resonances with Augustinian motifs: visibility-invisibility and advance-rest. The idol presents itself as a visible sight that claims to fulfill the gaze in its intention to see the divine while the icon summons the gaze to rise beyond the visible representation toward an infinite height and depth whose "excessiveness" saturates the gaze even as it draws it to continually surpass itself: "The invisible … appears in a semblance … which, however, never reduces the invisible to the slackened wave of the visible."[78] In terms of the binary opposition of advance-rest, the idol is defined by its invitation to allow the gaze to rest.[79] In contrast, the icon is characterized by its ceaseless work of referring beyond itself and thus summoning the gaze to travel through the visible representation to the invisible infinite: "The gaze can never rest or settle if it looks at an icon; it always must rebound upon the invisible, in order to go back in it up the infinite stream of the invisible. In this sense, the icon makes visible only by giving rise to an infinite gaze."[80] Finally, Marion's distinction has an affinity with Augustine's approach insofar as he distinguishes idol and icon in terms of opposite points of intitiative: the idol manifests the attempt of the visible to grasp the invisible, while the icon receptively allows for the invisible to manifest itself.[81]

Marion's distinction between the idol and the icon, as two diametrically different approaches to knowledge of the divine, allows us to finally characterize Augustine's theological project in *De Trinitate* as one that is concerned to uphold the Nicene teaching on the triune nature of

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only understand the event of the Incarnation eschatologically. ("The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity," 349, n. 4). He does not deal with Marion's distinction between idol and icon, which I have chosen as the point of comparison between Marion and Augustine.

[77] Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*: *Hors-Texte*. (trans. Thomas A. Carlson; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 9.

[78] Marion, *God Without Being*, 17.

[79] "But that which renders a gaze idolatrous could not, at least at first, arise from an ethical choice: it reveals a sort of essential fatigue. The gaze settles only inasmuch as it rests … In the idol the gaze is buried. The idol would be disqualified thus, vis-à-vis revelation, not at all because it would offer the gaze an illegitimate spectacle, but first because it suggests to the gaze where to rest (itself)" Marion, *God Without Being*, 13.

[80] Marion, *God Without Being*, 8.

[81] Marion, *God Without Being*, 17.

God in an iconic mode and not let it be replaced by a conceptualization that is, in Marion's sense, idolatrous. At the beginning of this paper, we saw that Augustine was fundamentally concerned with the directionality of theological thought, whether it projected human conceptions on to the divine or allowed the divine to symbolically mediate itself in adaptation to human sensibility. The latter alternative represents the key methodological principle which he calls "*fidei initium*." Augustine then deals with the theophanies of the Old Testament which inaugurate the history of divine symbolic self-manifestation. In doing so, Augustine's aim is precisely to assert the *distance* between the appearances and the reality to which they refer in order to avert a precipitous deduction from the visibility of the appearances to the visibility and subordinate transcendence of the Son to whom these appearances are presumed to refer. It would be justifiable here again to speak, in Marion's terms, of Augustine's insistence that these Old Testament theophanies maintain their iconic status and not degenerate toward an idolatrous diminution of the distance between visible sign and invisible referent: "We find again, at work in the icon, the concept of distance: that union increases in the measure of distinction, and reciprocally."[82] That this distance is both maintained and overcome in Christ is a theme that runs through the whole work and finds focused expression in Books 4 and 13. In Christ's humanity, all the creaturely signs of divine self-manifestation find their summit point. At the same time, the humanity of Christ refers us to his divinity which is united with the Father and the Spirit, a divinity that is both other and yet "one and the same" in a personal unity with his humanity. Thus, Christ is the supreme sign and the way from all signs to the ultimate signified, a principle that is also intimated by Marion: "In this sense, the formula that St. Paul applies to Christ, *eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*, icon of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) must serve as our norm . . ."[83]

But it is perhaps in relation to the question of the efficacy of the Trinitarian image in humanity that Marion's distinction can be most hermeneutically fruitful. The problem with much of the discussion of this issue is that it seems to presume Augustine's intention was to actually present an objectifiable view of the divine Triune being in the triad of human consciousness. This discussion amounts to alternative

[82] Marion, *God Without Being*, 23.
[83] Marion, *God Without Being*, 17.

judgments as to whether Augustine is seeking to demonstrate the success or the failure of the enterprise of viewing the Trinitarian image in humanity as a place where the gaze aimed at the Triune God can find its rest. But in fact Augustine demonstrates neither the success nor failure of this enterprise, but rules out such a project from the opening words of Book 1. There, it is clearly laid out that the gaze which aims at the sight of God enjoys its rest only in eschatological union. Augustine thus never sets out to explore the validity of setting up an "idol" of the Trinitarian image in humanity. Rather, he engages the positive project of facilitating an iconic sight of the Triune God, in the absence of which the human mind is likely to construct for itself an idolatrous sight that projects human conceptions onto the divine. For Augustine, perceiving the Trinitarian image in humanity is a work that flows out of the symbolic self-manifestation of God and it is a perception that allows both for the experience of triadic mutuality that structures faith in the Triune God, as well as an awareness of how the mutuality of human consciousness falls short of the vision of the Triune God. But, ultimately, the point is not even that of registering the objective similarities and differences between human and divine triads, as static "sights." Rather, seeing the triadic structure of human consciousness opens up a way of referring oneself to the Triune God. Augustine's claim is not that the vision of the triadic structure of human consciousness encapsulates or objectively reproduces the vision of the Triune God, but rather that the former vision, when informed and enabled by a life of faith in Christ, stimulates and orients the gaze that seeks the Triune God. In Marion's key formulation, "the icon does not result from a vision but provokes one."[84] For Augustine, the history of revelation is a series of divinely ordained provocations toward the eschatological sight of God. His goal in *De Trinitate* is simply to add one more provocation, which he considers to be deducible from those given in Scripture, toward the vision that can only be enjoyed when Christ hands over the kingdom to God and Father and thereby refers all the signs of divine self-manifestation to the reality of the Triune God. In the meantime, knowledge of the Triune God is ultimately a matter of being provoked to refer oneself wholly toward that eschatological vision: "Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three (as divinely established in the nature of his mind) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the

[84] Marion, *God Without Being*, 17.

eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love—has thereby found the image of that supreme Trinity. To the memory, sight, and love of this supreme Trinity, in order to recollect it, see it, and enjoy it, he should refer every ounce and particle of his life."[85]

[85] 15.20.39; Hill, *The Trinity*, 426.

EPHREM'S DOCTRINE OF GOD

Ute Possekel*

1. *Introduction*

Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373 CE) was one of the most prolific of early Syriac Christian authors, and arguably the most influential: his symbolic theology with its rich imagery shaped Syriac Christianity for centuries to come.[1] Few details are known about Ephrem's life, but the general outline is clear.[2] Ephrem spent his entire life in the Roman frontier region of northern Mesopotamia. Born of Christian parents, he grew to maturity in the post-Constantinian church in Nisibis, on the Roman-Persian frontier, where he was closely associated with its bishops Jacob, Babu, and Vologeses.[3] In 363 CE, after Emperor Julian's failed campaign into Persian territory,[4] the peace treaty negotiated between Julian's

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[1] An excellent introduction to Ephrem is S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, revised edition (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1992). See also Brock, "Ephrem and the Syriac Tradition," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (ed. F. Young et al; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 362–372. The introductions to recent English translations of Ephrem's work are also very useful: S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 7–75; K.E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989), 3–48; E.G. Mathews and J.P. Amar, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works* (FC 91; Washingston, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 3–56. On his influence upon the later tradition, see for example L. van Rompay, "Mallpânâ dilan Suryâyâ, Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus of Mabbog: Respect and Distance," *Hugoye* 7/1 (2004) [http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol7No1/HV7N1Van Rompay.html]; J. Martikainen, *Gerechtigkeit und Güte Gottes: Studien zur Theologie von Ephraem dem Syrer und Philoxenos von Mabbug* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981).

[2] Ephrem's own writings provide some biographical evidence, which is supplemented by Syriac, Greek, and Latin authors, as well as by a rather fictitious Syriac *Vita*. For an overview see Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 12–25.

[3] On these, see J.M. Fiey, "Les évêques de Nisibe au temps de saint Éphrem," *ParOr* 4 (1973): 123–135.

[4] On Julian, see G.W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978). Important sources on the Persian campaign are Ephrem's

successor Jovian and the Persian ruler Shapur stipulated the cession of Nisibis to Sassanid Persia. Ephrem, along with other Nisibene Christians, emigrated to Edessa, where he spent the remaining ten years of his life.[5]

By the time of Ephrem, Christianity had spread to the Syriac-speaking regions both within the Roman Empire and beyond its eastern frontier, to Persia, where Ephrem's older contemporary Aphrahat flourished.[6] Ephrem and most Syriac-speaking Christians on Roman territory considered themselves politically subjects of the empire, and theologically members of the normative, post-Nicene, imperial church.[7]

Ephrem's extant works fall into three groups, namely prose works, metrical treatises, and poetry. The prose works consist of theological treatises, refutations of heresies, and biblical commentaries, of which those on Genesis, Exodus, and the Diatessaron are extant in Syriac. For Ephrem's understanding of God, the most important prose work is the collection of treatises called the *Prose Refutations*. Ephrem's metrical speeches (*memre*), which used syllable count as metre (seven syllables for each half line), often treated topics of theological significance. Some of these discourses may have originated in a teaching context, whereas others may have been delivered as sermons. The *memre* most relevant for Ephrem's doctrine of God are those collected under the title *Sermons on Faith*. Finally, Ephrem's poems (*madrāše*) constitute the largest part of his corpus. The poems were written in a variety of metres, and some were performed by choirs of women as part of the liturgy.[8] The

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Hymns against Julian (cf. note 9 below) and Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*; W. Seyfarth, ed., *Ammiani Marcellini rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), English trans.: *Ammianus Marcellinus, The Later Roman Empire (A.D. 354–378)* (trans. W. Hamilton; London: Penguin, 1986).

[5] On Ephrem's life in Nisibis and Edessa, see Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 25–37.

[6] Aphrahat is author of twenty-three treatises referred to as *Demonstrations*; J. Parisot, ed., *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes*, PS 1.1.-1.2. (Paris, 1894–1907); French trans.: *Aphraate, Les exposés* (trans. J.-M. Pierre; SC 349, 359; Paris: Cerf, 1988–1989); German trans.: *Aphrahat, Unterweisungen* (trans. P. Bruns; Freiburg: Herder, 1991). On Persian Christianitiy, see G.G. Blum "Zur religionspolitischen Situation der persischen Kirche im 3. und 4. Jahrhundert," *ZKG* 91 (1980): 11–32; S.P. Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties," in *Religion and National Identity* (ed. S. Mews; Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 1–19; J.M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq*, CSCO 310, Sub. 36 (1970).

[7] Ephrem's view of church-state relations has been discussed by S. Griffith, "Ephraem the Syrian's Hymns 'Against Julian': Meditations on History and Imperial Power," *VC* 41 (1987): 238–266.

[8] *Hymn on the Resurrection* 2, 6–8 (cf. note 9 below). That the inclusion of female

madrāše treat topics of spiritual and liturgical significance (for example, the nativity, fasting, Easter) and of theological importance (heresies, Arianism).[9] Among the collections of *madrāše*, the *Hymns on Faith* and the *Hymns against Heresies* most extensively address questions concerning God.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Ephrem's theology is his symbolic approach. He formulated theology not primarily through the use of abstract, philosophical concepts, as was common among the Greek and Latin fathers,[10] but by means of symbols and paradoxes which served to convey theological insights to the reader. This is not to say, to be sure, that the poet-theologian Ephrem lacked basic understanding of Greek philosophical paradigms,[11] or that his theological discourse lacked coherence, but rather that his theological method differed. To use an image introduced by S. Brock, if one envisions a theological statement as the center of a circle, the philosophical approach to theology would seek to define the center conceptually, but Ephrem's symbolic approach strives to localize and identify the circle's center by circumventing it with paradoxes and symbols, thereby leaving it

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choirs in the liturgy was an innovation by Ephrem is stated by Jacob of Sarug, *Memra on Ephrem* 40–50 and 96–114 (*A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug* [ed. J.P. Amar; PO 47, fas. 1, no. 209; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995], 34–36, 48–52).

[9] Ephrem's works will be abbreviated as follows and, unless otherwise noted, were edited with German trans. by E. Beck in the CSCO series (Louvain). *Azy.* = *Hymns on Unleavened Bread*, CSCO 248–249, Syr. 108–109 (1964); *CGen* = *Commentary on Genesis*, ed. with Latin trans., R.M. Tonneau, CSCO 152–153, Syr. 71–72 (1955), English trans., Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 67–213; *CH* = *Hymns against Heresies*, CSCO 169–170, Syr. 76–77 (1957); *CNis* = *Hymns on Nisibis*, CSCO 218–219, 240–241, Syr. 92–93, 102–103 (1961–1963); *Eccl.* = *Hymns on the Church*, CSCO 198–199, Syr. 84–85 (1960); *HdF* = *Hymns on Faith*, CSCO 154–155, Syr. 73–74 (1955); *Jul.* = *Hymns against Julian*, CSCO 174–175, Syr. 78–79 (1957), English trans., McVey, *Ephrem*, 227–257; *Nat.* = *Hymns on the Nativity*, CSCO 186–187, Syr. 82–83 (1959), English trans., McVey, *Ephrem*, 63–217; *Par.* = *Hymns on Paradise*, CSCO 174–175, Syr. 78–79 (1957), English trans., Brock, *St. Ephrem*; *PR* = *Prose Refutations*, ed. with English trans., C.W. Mitchell, A.A. Bevan, and F.C. Burkitt, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912–1921); *Res.* = *Hymns on the Resurrection*, CSCO 248–249, Syr. 108–109 (1964); *SdF* = *Sermons on Faith*, CSCO 212–213, Syr. 88–89 (1961); *SDN* = *Sermon on Our Lord*, CSCO 270–271, Syr. 116–117 (1966), English trans., Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 273–332; *Virg.* = *Hymns on Virginity*, CSCO 223–224, Syr. 94–95 (1962), English trans., McVey, *Ephrem*, 261–468. Translations quoted are mine unless otherwise indicated. Translations quoted from others may be slightly adapted.

[10] See for example E. Beck, *Ephräms Trinitätslehre im Bild von Sonne/Feuer, Licht und Wärme*, CSCO 425, Sub. 62 (Louvain: Peeters, 1981), 24–25.

[11] See U. Possekel, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 580, Sub. 102 (Louvain: Peeters, 1999).

undefined, yet nonetheless locating and describing it. "The former procedure [that is, a philosophical approach to theology] can be seen as providing a static understanding of the centre point, while the latter [that is, Ephrem's symbolic approach] offers an understanding that remains essentially dynamic in character."[12] A coherent theological view underlay Ephrem's poetry, but he did not usually spell this out systematically. The reader, therefore, needs to see in conjunction the manifold symbols which the poet related to a given subject and to gather from these the essence of Ephrem's theological views.[13]

Ephrem formulated his doctrine of God to a significant extent with apologetic purposes in mind, and therefore the notion of God embraced by his opponents shall be outlined briefly in the next section. Subsequent sections will address Ephrem's conviction that God is both hidden and revealed, his epistemology, and his understanding of the function and limit of theological language about God. Next, Ephrem's theology of names, which stands at the center of his notion of God, will be discussed in some detail, as will be several of his more prominent metaphors for God. The final section will address Ephrem's trinitarian thought.

2. *Historical context*

Ephrem expressed his doctrine of God by means of symbols and paradoxes, types and images, and he did so in a two-fold historical context, first in response to the particular challenges to the doctrine of God faced by the Syrian church, and second within the larger context of the fourth-century Arian controversies in the imperial church. A proper understanding of Ephrem's theological emphases requires a brief discussion of this two-fold historical context.

Early Syriac-speaking Christianity was diverse, and initially dominated by groups later regarded as heterodox, such as Marcionites, Gnostics, and the followers of Bardaisan. Marcionism had spread

[12] Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 25.

[13] On Ephrem's theological method, see R. Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology," *ParOr* 6–7 (1975–1976): 1–20; T. Bou Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de Saint Ephrem le Syrien* (Kaslik, Lebanon: Bibliothèque de l'Université Saint-Esprit, 1988), esp. ch. 1, 23–120. Ephrem's symbolic terminology is discussed by E. Beck, "Zur Terminologie von Ephräms Bildtheologie," in M. Schmidt, ed., *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981), 239–277.

throughout the empire, but in the Syrian East, according to the argument of W. Bauer, it actually had preceded the arrival of Christian orthodoxy,[14] and it remained a powerful influence for centuries to come.[15] Marcion (died ca. 154) and his followers claimed the existence of two divine entities—the good god, the foreign one proclaimed by Jesus and the wrathful god, the creator, of whom the Old Testament spoke[16]—and the rejection of Marcionite dualism became one of the main tenets of Ephrem's theology. The urgency of the task was exacerbated by the wide dissemination of dualistic notions in northern Mesopotamia. Manichaeans, too, assumed the existence of two co-eternal divine principles, and they developed an elaborate dualist myth.[17] Bardaisan (died 222) defended the oneness of God, but held that God had created the world from pre-existing substances, which for Ephrem compromised monotheism.[18] Throughout his hymns and in the *Prose Refutations*, Ephrem repudiated dualist notions of God and, according the sixth-century Syrian author Jacob of Sarug, he opposed Marcionism successfully.[19]

With regard to the larger historical context, the Arian and Neo-Arian debates dominated the theological discourse on God not only

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[14] W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ed. R.A. Kraft; Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1996); translation of *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (2d ed.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1964).

[15] H.J.W. Drijvers, "Marcionism in Syria: Principles, Problems, Polemics," *Second Century* 6 (1987/88): 153–172; D. Bundy, "Marcion and the Marcionites in Early Syriac Apologetics," *Muséon* 101 (1988): 21–32; J.M. Fiey, "Les marcionites dans les textes historiques de l'Église de Perse," *Muséon* 83 (1970): 183–188.

[16] On the Marcionite understanding of God, see A. v. Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (2d ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 93–143; W. Löhr, "Did Marcion distinguish between a just god and a good god?" in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung* (ed. G. May and K. Greschat; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 131–146; B. Aland, "Marcion: Versuch einer neuen Interpretation," *ZThK* 70 (1973): 420–447; and B. Aland, "Sünde und Erlösung bei Marcion und die Konsequenz für die sog. beiden Götter Marcions," in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung*, 147–157.

[17] On Manichaeism, see for example S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); J.D. BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2000).

[18] Bardaisan emphasized the oneness of God and opposed Marcion's dualism, cf. *Book of the Laws of the Countries*; H.J.W. Drijvers, ed. with English trans., *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965), 4.9; 4.14–15; 10.12; 12.21; Ephrem, *CH.* 3.4.

[19] Jacob of Sarug, *Memra on Ephrem* 6–7, 160–161, 175–176.

in the Graeco-Roman world,[20] but also in the Syriac-speaking regions. Five bishops from the region east of the Euphrates had attended the Council of Nicaea in 325; they were Aithallaha of Edessa, Antiochus of Reshaina, Mareas of Macedonopolis, John of Persia, and Jacob of Nisibis, Ephrem's bishop in the time of the poet's youth.[21] Later legend held that Ephrem accompanied Jacob to the council, a claim that can not be substantiated by any other evidence.[22] Although Ephrem did not mention Nicaea by name, he explicitly referred to the council,[23] and he showed familiarity with the Nicene phrase φῶς ἐκ φωτός (light from light): "And our Lord … how pure must have been his divine nature, which is light from light."[24] The defense of Nicene orthodoxy became an important theological theme, for disputes about the nature of the Godhead, commonly subsumed under the name "Arian controversy,"[25] divided the church in Nisibis during Ephrem's time. In his *Sermons on Faith*, which likely date from his Nisibene era, he criticized those who by

[20] On the theology of Arius and his followers, see for example A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, tr. J. Bowden, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 219–248; R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988). On the later stages of the controversy on the Trinity, see also Th.A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979); M.R. Barnes and D.H. Williams, eds., *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); M. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1–51.

[21] E. Honigmann, "La liste originale des Pères de Nicée," *Byzantion* 14 (1939): 46; H. Kaufhold, "Griechisch-syrische Väterlisten der frühen griechischen Synoden," *OrChr* 77 (1993): 1–96, esp. 60.

[22] "Syriac Life of Ephrem," *Syrische Grammatik mit Paradigmen, Literatur, Chrestomathie und Glossar* (12th ed.; ed. C. Brockelmann; Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1976), 25, 8–12; the critical edition by J.P. Amar, "The Syriac *Vita* Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1988) was not available.

[23] *CH.* 22.20.

[24] *CH.* 55.2. The text of the Nicaenum is in H. Denzinger, ed., *Enchiridion symbolorum* 125 (37th ed.; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1991).

[25] As recent scholarship has shown, the name "Arianism" for the entirety of the fourth-century theological controversies on the Trinity is misleading, for the later group around Aetius and Eunomius, sometimes called "Anhomoians," neither saw themselves as followers of Arius, nor did they take recourse to his teachings. Rather, it was their opponents who identified them as "Arians" (cf. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 30–31; Hanson, *Search*, 598). In this paper, Aetius, Eunomius, and their followers will be called "Neo-Arians," following the terminology used by Kopecek and Hanson. It should be noted, however, that this is a modern designation that was chosen neither by the Eunomians nor by their fourth-century opponents (Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 31).

theological subtleties investigate and try to define the divine, a charge most likely leveled against the followers of Aetius and Eunomius.[26]

In Edessa, Ephrem's home from 363 to 373, the "Arians" constituted a sizable group, as is evident from Ephrem's refutations in works likely dating from his Edessan period, such as the *Hymns on Faith* and the *Hymns against Heresies*.[27] In the latter work, Ephrem mentioned by name Arians and Aetians.[28] External evidence supports a strong Arian presence in fourth-century Edessa as well: a letter to the Persian Christians attributed to Aithallaha—who may or may not be identical with the bishop of Edessa who attended the Council of Nicaea—defended Nicene trinitarian theology against Arianizing tendencies.[29] Moreover, the *Chronicle of Edessa*, compiled in the sixth century, recorded that in

[26] The *SdF* can be dated by their many references to the ongoing Roman-Persian war and the sufferings of the population, which fit well into the Nisibene context, for example, *SdF* 6, 345–390, 443–470; cf. E. Beck, *Ephraems Reden über den Glauben: Ihr theologischer Lehrgehalt und ihr geschichtlicher Rahmen*, StAns 33 (Rome, 1953), 112, 120–125. In *SdF* 6, 17–18 Ephrem denounces ecclesiastical leaders who are leading "subtly" (ܡܠܝܟܝܬ), a term which he elsewhere connects with Aetians (*CH* 22.4).

[27] Beck dates the *Hymns on Faith* to the last years of Ephrem's life, thus shortly before 373 (CSCO 155, p. I).

[28] *CH* 22, 4.20. In these passages, Arians and Aetians occur first in lists of heresies that also include Paulinians, Sabellians, Photinians, Borborians, Cathars, Audians, and Messalians.

[29] The *Letter by Aithallaha* is preserved only in Armenian trans., *Aithallaha Episcopi Edesseni epistola ad christianos in Persarum regione de fide* (ed. I. Thorossian; Typis S. Lazari in Insula: Venice, 1942), but was not available to me; German trans., P. Bruns, "Brief Aithallahas, des Bischofs von Edessa (Urhai), an die Christen des Perserlandes über den Glauben," *OrChr* 77 (1993): 120–136. Bruns discusses the letter's theology in detail and situates it within the fourth-century Syriac church in his "*Aithallahas Brief über den Glauben*: Ein bedeutendes Dokument frühsyrischer Theologie," *OrChr* 76 (1992): 46–73. Bruns here accepts the authorship of Aithallaha, bishop of Edessa from 324/5 to 345, and dates the letter to ca. 340 (47). Bruns notes the letter's advanced theological terminology and the author's emphasis on the divinity of the Holy Spirit (71). Comparing the letter with the writings of Ephrem, whose terminology is rather imprecise, Bruns attributes the discrepancies to a "linguistic and theological difference between the educated episcopate and representatives of the monastic church" (53). It should be noted, however, that Ephrem himself was not a monk, but probably a member of the "Sons and Daughters of the Covenant." The letter's more advanced terminology and the high regard for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit expressed therein have led D. Bundy to different conclusions. Bundy asserts the letter could not have been written by Bishop Aithallaha, but must date to after 381, probably to the period between 410 and 428. ("The Letter of Aithallah [CPG 3340]: Theology, Purpose, Date," in R. Lavenant, ed., *III Symposium Syriacum 1980*, OrChrAn 221 [1983], 135–142). Bruns, although he quotes Bundy's essay, does not address the latter's arguments.

the year 373, just months after Ephrem's death, the Arian party came to dominate the church in Edessa and succeeded in driving out the orthodox community.[30] According to Theodoret, the emperor Valens (364–378) exiled the orthodox leader Eulogius and others who refused to accept the imperially appointed Arian bishop. After the death of Valens, Eulogius returned to the city to become its bishop in 379; he later attended the Council of Constantinople in 381.[31]

These events imply that during Ephrem's time a sizable and influential "Arian" community existed in both Nisibis and Edessa. As will be discussed in more detail below, the nature of some of Ephrem's theological arguments—and in particular his emphasis on the impossibility of searching out and defining the divine essence—suggest that his opponents were not mainly advocating the views of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius, but rather those of the "Neo-Arians" Aetius and Eunomius.[32] Yet other arguments by Ephrem seem to be directed against Arius' theology,[33] and it remains unclear whether Ephrem himself cared to make clear distinctions among his opponents' theological views.

3. *Deus absconditus—Deus revelatus*

God, for Ephrem, is the wholly other, is the incomprehensible and inscrutable one whose being can not be grasped by humankind. In the metrical discourses known as *Sermons on Faith*, he notes:

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[30] *Chronicle of Edessa* 31, ed. I. Guidi, *Chronica minora* I, CSCO 1, Syr. 1 (1955), 5, 8–9.

[31] Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.17–18; L. Parmentier and G.C. Hansen, eds., *Theodoret, Kirchengeschichte*, third ed., GCS N.F. 5 (1998), English trans., B. Jackson, *NPNF* 2nd series, vol. 3 (1892) (section 4.15). For Eulogius' rise to the episcopate, see *Chronicle of Edessa* 34. On his attendance at Constantinople in 381, see Kaufhold, "Väterlisten," 73. On the Arian dominance in Edessa, cf. also Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.18; G.C. Hansen, ed., *Sokrates, Kirchengeschichte*, GCS N.F. 1 (1995), English trans., A.C. Zenos, *NPNF* 2nd series, vol. 2 (1890); J.B. Segal, *Edessa: "The Blessed City"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970; reprint Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2001), 90f.

[32] Cf. Beck, *Reden*, 112.

[33] Ephrem rejects the view that the Son was a creature, and he addresses the biblical passages quoted by the Arians, Prov 8:22 and Mark 13:32. Cf. *HdF* 53, 10 and 53, 13–14 on Prov 8:22 and *HdF* 77, 1–3; 78; 79, 1 on Mark 13:32. In *HdF* 40, 1 he refutes the Arian assumption that "there was, when he was not." On Arius' theology, see Williams, *Arius*, 95–116. Ephrem's response is discussed by E. Beck, *Die Theologie des hl. Ephraem in seinen Hymnen über den Glauben*, StAns 21 (Rome, 1949), 62–80.

For higher than every mind
is the creator of every mind.
By human beings (God) can not be investigated,
and by angels (God) can not be comprehended.
The creature can not with its knowledge
discourse about its creator.[34]

Using the rhetorical technique of *a minore ad maius*,[35] the poet then argues that if human beings can not even understand their own making, how can they endeavor to comprehend their creator. "If dust, your relative, from which you are, remains hidden from you, how will you investigate the majesty, whose inquiry is greater than all?"[36] An ontological divide, sometimes referred to as a "chasm" (ܦܗܬܐ, *peḥtā*)—the expression from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:26)[37]—separates the creator from creation. "Which creature could search out the Godhead (ܐܠܗܘܬܐ, *'alāhutā*), for a chasm (*peḥtā*) exists between (creature) and the creator."[38] Therefore, God is hidden and far removed from the creatures.

Immeasurably exalted and hidden
is the creator from his creatures.
A creature is a companion of his fellow creature,
by space separated from it.
But the maker is removed
by his (divine) essence (*'itutā*)
from his possessions.[39]

But God is not only the *Deus absconditus*, God is *Deus revelatus* as well, bridging the chasm and reaching out towards creation. Ephrem explores this paradox in the first *Sermon on Faith*, illustrating his point with the sun's remoteness, yet proximity, to the earth.

A great interval is in the middle
between creator and creature.
It is not the case that (the creator) would not be crossing over to (the creature),
for without him, (the creature) would not even exist.

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[34] *SdF* 1, 11–16; cf. *SdF* 5, 159–161.

[35] This rhetorical technique is discussed by H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, tr. M.T. Bliss et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), §§397, 404.

[36] *SdF* 1, 173–175; cf. *SdF* 1, 17–22.

[37] The word occurs in the Harklean version, cf. G.A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels*, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1996). See also Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 26.

[38] *HdF* 69, 11; cf. *HdF* 15, 5.

[39] *SdF* 1, 139–144. On the concept of *'itutā*, see below.

(God) is with it, and is not with it,
(God) is united with it, and is separated from it.
As much as the sun is near to the earth,
its nature is far from it …
How much will the creator be separated
from the creature, although he is with it.[40]

God is at the same time revealed to God's creatures and hidden from them.[41] God reaches out towards humankind and reveals the divine nature in three different ways: through nature, through Scripture, and above all in the incarnation, through Christ. Thereby, God allows human beings to grasp aspects of the divine and to make affirmative statements about God's nature. Ephrem thus did not choose the *via negativa*—as did the sixth-century writer Ps.-Dionysius whose theology Ephrem in many ways anticipated—but maintained a dialectic tension between kataphatic and apophatic theology.[42] Sometimes, Ephrem discusses Scripture and nature together, calling them "two books" that are replete with symbols of the divine reality. At other times he refers to nature, the Old Testament, and the New Testament as "three harps" that complement one another.[43]

Nature, God's creation, contains many symbols that point to its creator. Natural phenomena can illuminate particular aspects of the divine, as for example the sun with its light and warmth can aid human comprehension of the Trinity, a topic to be elaborated below. The Son's generation from the Father alone is a mystery, Ephrem affirms, and he observes that even in the world of nature such mysteries do occur. Yet if nature's secrets are already too difficult for human beings to explain, how can people attempt to investigate the Son's generation?

Who has ever seen a raven who joined with another? …
The bee gives birth like a virgin,
and the worm springs up singly …

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[40] *SdF* 1, 151–158, 163–164.

[41] *SdF* 2, 153–154; cf. *HdF* 44, 7.

[42] The Ps.-Dionysian works are found in B.R. Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), English trans.: *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (trans. C. Luibheid; Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987). Parallels between Ephrem and the Areopagite are evident in *Divine Names* 1–2 and 4.

[43] "But who has seen our Lord and admired his playing on three harps? He blends their counterpoint wisely lest their hearers be alienated: signs, symbols and prototypes, so that nature and Scripture may convince. With the one creation he bound together two Testaments to put the doubters to shame." (*Virg.* 30, 1; tr. McVey). Cf. *Virg.* 29, 1.

> Also, a pool of water breeds by means of the sun
> and reproves the deniers, for it brings forth in purity.[44]

Ephrem finds in nature a multitude of images for Christ, such as the lamb,[45] oil,[46] pearl,[47] or rennet.[48] The fish who escapes from the fishers to the depths of the sea illustrates how prayer should be centered inside the mind and not roam about.[49] Objects from daily life, as the mirror, or the milestones along the wayside, are images that recur throughout Ephrem's poetry as vehicles of spiritual teachings.[50]

The second component of divine self-revelation is Scripture. In Scripture, God revealed himself and "clothed himself in names," thereby making God's self accessible to humankind.[51] The Mosaic law and the prophets symbolically showed the way of truth, which came to be perfectly revealed by Christ.[52] With regard to the New Testament, Ephrem emphasizes that the revelation contained in the four canonical Gospels suffices—Christians must not look for other sources.[53] Unlike the Marcionites, whose dualist doctrine of God Ephrem vehemently opposes, the Syrian stresses the continuity between Old and New Testaments, the congruence of the Christian notion of God with the God of the Old Testament. "Our Lord in his testaments perfected, laid down the path of truth for the people who came to the way of life."[54] Frequently, Ephrem reads the Old Testament typologically, interpreting its symbols as types for Christ, the sacraments, or the Christian life. For example, the coal of fire which in Isaiah's vision the angel held with tongs and used to purify the prophet's mouth (Is. 6:6–7) serves for Ephrem as a symbol of the Eucharist.

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[44] *HdF* 41, 1–2.
[45] *Nat.* 1, 42; *Azy.* 3.
[46] *Virg.* 4, 4–5; 6, 1.
[47] *HdF* 81; 85.
[48] *Nat.* 1, 85.
[49] *HdF* 20, 5.
[50] On these two images, see E. Beck, "Das Bild vom Spiegel bei Ephräm," *OCP* 19 (1953): 5–24; E. Beck, "Das Bild vom Weg mit Meilensteinen und Herbergen bei Ephräm," *OrChr* 65 (1981): 1–39. The mirror is also discussed by Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 61–62, 74–77.
[51] On the subject of the divine descent through names, see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 53–66.
[52] *CH* 25, 2–3.
[53] *SdF* 2, 39–52.
[54] *CH* 25, 3; cf. *CH* 26, 5. "Behold, the prophets are carrying, as servants, the images of Christ who is ruling over all. Nature and Scripture are carrying together the symbols of his humanity and his divinity." (*Azy.* 4, 23–24).

> The seraph did not touch the coal with his fingers,
> (the coal) only touched Isaiah's mouth.
> He did not take it, and he did not eat it,
> but behold, to us our Lord gave both.[55]

The ultimate self-revelation of God took place in the incarnation, when God "clothed himself in human nature," a form of revelation necessitated by the ongoing human failure to seek help from the divine symbols contained in nature and Scripture.

> For it saw the (divine) majesty[56]
> who had clothed itself in all images,
> that humankind did not seek
> to be saved by its aids.
> (The divine majesty) sent its beloved one,
> and instead of the borrowed images
> in which it had clothed itself,
> the first-born clothed himself in limbs of truth
> and united himself with humankind.
> He gave from his and he took from ours,
> so that his mixture would make alive our mortality.[57]

Christ is the way through which humankind can reach the Father.[58] Christ is like the fruit that reveals the tree's nature.[59] It is through the Son alone that humankind can gain access to the divine.[60]

4. *Knowledge of God*

Ephrem was much concerned with setting the proper boundaries for the human ability to comprehend God, often in the context of refuting the challenge he perceived to arise from the Neo-Arian position on the comprehensibility of God. Whereas Arius and his early followers held, as did their opponents, that God's essence was incomprehensible,[61] the

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[55] *HdF* 10, 10. On this image see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 103–106.

[56] Ephrem uses the feminine abstract noun ܪܒܘܬܐ (*rabutā*, majesty) with feminine verbs and pronouns which I generally translate in the neuter.

[57] *CH* 32, 9.

[58] *CH* 26, 4; cf. John 14:6.

[59] *SdF* 2, 25–32; cf. *CH* 26, 4.

[60] *SdF* 1, 91–92.

[61] The Arian historian Philostorgius criticizes Arius for asserting "that God can not be known, or comprehended, or conceived by the human mind." (*Historia ecclesiastica* 2.3, ed. J. Bidez, *Philostorgius, Kirchengeschichte*, GCS 21 [1913]; cf. Photius, *Library* 40, in R. Henry, ed., *Photius, Bibliothèque*, vol. 1 [Paris: Belles Lettres, 1959]).

Neo-Arians argued that God's essence was comprehensible, namely comprehensible as ungenerated.[62] According to the historian Socrates, Eunomius stated:

> God does not know more about his own *ousia* than we do, and it is not known more to him and less to us. But whatever we may know about it, that he also certainly knows; and conversely, whatever he knows, that (knowledge) you will find exactly in us.[63]

This quotation is not part of any extant work by Eunomius, but can be considered representative of his view, for his own works contain statements on the comprehensibility of God's essence as ungenerated essence (οὐσία ἀγέννητος),[64] as do the writings of the anti-Eunomians Gregory of Nyssa[65] and Epiphanius, of which the latter cites Eunomius as follows: "With such entire clarity do I know God and so fully do I know him and am acquainted with him, that I do not know myself better than I know God."[66]

Rationalism was the most outstanding feature of the thought of Aetius and his disciple Eunomius,[67] and it was against their metaphysical discussions of the relationship between the Son and Father, often referred to by Ephrem as "subtleties," that the Syrian reacted. He consequently cautioned against scrutinizing theological mysteries and stressed that all theological discourse must take place according to measure. Immoderate investigation, he warned, would lead to self-destruction, a theme developed in the fourth *Sermon on Faith*.

> I wish to come near,
> but I fear that I might move away,
> for the daring one who comes near and investigates,
> removes himself very much.
> But him who comes near with measure
> propriety does not drive away.

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[62] Kopecek, *History*, vol. 2, 357; cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev. ed.; New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 249.

[63] Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.13, translation quoted from Hanson, *Search*, 629.

[64] Eunomius, *Apologia* 7, in R.P. Vaggione, ed., *Eunomius, The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

[65] Hanson, *Search*, 629–630, referring to Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 2.61 (929); 3 (viii) 5 (528, 529); 3 (viii) 14 (832).

[66] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76.4.1, 2 and 76.6.1, ed. K. Holl, GCS 25, 31, 37 (1915–1933); English trans. in P.R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). See Hanson, *Search*, 606.

[67] Hanson, *Search*, 611.

We must not come (too) close, lest we move away;
we must not move away, lest we perish.
Let us temper and draw near with measure
to the immeasurable essence.[68]

The image of drowning in the ocean serves to support the poet's warning: "(God) is a great sea—if you are searching him out, the heaviness of its waves will overcome you."[69] And employing one of his favorite images, that of the "medicine of life,"[70] the Syrian exclaims: "Disputation with measure is the medicine of life, but without measure it is the poison of death!"[71]

Far from being anti-intellectual, however, Ephrem highly values the ability of human reason to invent, construct, and design, and he compares human artifice (ܐܘܡܢܘܬܐ, *ʾumānutā*, corresponding to the Greek τέχνη), to the creative work of God: "For God created the world and adorned it with nature, but if artifice had not adorned the world afterwards, the world would lie waste."[72] Ephrem thus does not oppose rational inquiry per se, but only objects to searching out the hidden mysteries of the divine. The proper place of human reason is "below the heavens," not the invisible deity.[73] With regard to theology, human investigation is appropriate for that which God chose to reveal of the divine nature, that is, the word of Scripture in which God clothed himself.[74]

Temperance, measure, and moderation are the guidelines for the human investigation of God. Theology must respect the limits set by

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[68] *SdF* 4, 1–10. On the subject of Ephrem's epistemology, see Beck, *Reden*, 42–63; Possekel, *Evidence*, 41–48; S. Griffith, "'Faith Seeking Understanding' in the Thought of St. Ephraem the Syrian," in *Faith Seeking Understanding: Learning and the Catholic Tradition* (ed. G.C. Berthold; Manchester, NH: Saint Anselm College Press, 1991), 35–55.

[69] *SdF* 4, 67–68; cf. *HdF* 5, 1.

[70] On this image, see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 99–106.

[71] *SdF* 2, 139–140.

[72] *PR* II, 47, 2–8. On human artifice, see Possekel, *Evidence*, 33–41; E. Beck, "ΤΕΧΝΗ und ΤΕΧΝΙΤΗΣ bei dem Syrer Ephräm," *OCP* 47 (1981): 295–331.

[73] *SdF* 2, 365–366.

[74] *CH* 32, 8–9. In the ninth *Hymn on Faith*, Ephrem alludes to the events described in Num 16, namely that two hundred and fifty priests, whose fault consisted in presuming to challenge the authority of Aaron, suffered death by fire. He then interprets the biblical story as a warning of the fiery destruction wrecked within the church by unlimited scrutiny. "Who, then, can escape from the great fire, if he brings into the church a foreign investigation? In the church, there should be debate which seeks out revealed things, but does not investigate hidden things." (*HdF* 8, 9; cf. *HdF* 9, 1). In the *Sermons on Faith*, Ephrem compares the Neo-Arian unrestricted investigation into the divine to Adam's effort to be like God (*SdF* 3, 7–10).

God, which Ephrem—as will be discussed below—understands to be the divine names. He unfolds his understanding of the limits of human knowledge in greatest detail in the *Hymns on Faith*, in an anti-Eunomian context. He here argues that human beings, as creatures ontologically entirely different from God, have no way in and of themselves to know God. Yet God chose to reveal aspects of God's self to humankind and to grant a limited understanding of God's nature. Ephrem does not cease to emphasize that all human knowledge of God is a gift and that people must not attempt to investigate beyond what has been revealed.

> With the knowledge that (God) gave to you, you are able
> to understand yourself and your God.
> Something which proceeded from within (God)
> drew you gently towards him.
> For your reach does not suffice
> to arrive at (God).
> (God) gave you the Word and it made you great.[75]

Ephrem's epistemological approach is characterized by a dialectical tension between the human desire to draw near to God and the fear of actually removing oneself further from God by attempting to come too close. For him, human knowledge of God must not go beyond the divine revelation and must not inquire beyond the limits of the divine names. Ephrem asserts his notion of the limitations of human knowledge of God against the Eunomian philosophical-theological attempts to define the divine nature. Although he expresses his objections through symbolism rather than in the language of philosophical theology, his arguments have much in common with those of the great Cappadocian theologians.[76]

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[75] *SdF* 2, 245–251. See also *HdF* 44, 7: "Who indeed, could be adequate to the Lord of natures, so that he could investigate his essence (*'itutā*) and seek out his fatherhood? . . . And if (God) does not wish to explain himself to us, there is no one in the creation who is able to interpret him."

[76] P.S. Russell, *St. Ephraem the Syrian and St. Gregory the Theologian Confront the Arians* (Baker Hill, Kottayam, India: SEERI, 1994). For a parallel between Ephrem's epistemology and that of Basil, see Basil, *Letter* 234, in Y. Courtonne, ed., *Basil, Lettres*, vol. 3 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966). Ephrem's critique of Neo-Arian "subtleties," that is, their use of Aristotelian logic, resembles Gregory of Nyssa's and Basil's complaints about Eunomius' "technology" (τεχνολογία). (Hanson, *Search*, 630–631).

5. *Theological discourse: the place of speech and silence*

Just as theological inquiry ought to be measured, Ephrem holds, so theological language needs to respect its own limitations. In particular, Ephrem often discusses the dialectical tension between speech and silence.[77]

Human beings wish to understand God, and whereas there is—within limits—a place for this, the proper attitude of the created being towards its creator ought to be one of faith and prayer. "Between a person and God is (only) faith and prayer, so that you may believe his truth and pray to his divinity."[78] This prayerful attitude advocated by Ephrem is more appropriately expressed by silence than by speech: "Restrain debate which does not suffice for (God), and attain silence which is suitable for (God)";[79] but once again, the Syrian sees both in a dialectical relationship. Silence and speech are like the two sides of a scale, he suggests, both equally important and dependent upon one another.[80] Both are given by God and each has its own function and place.[81] Theological language is necessary to "work the word of truth" like a field, to interpret Scripture, to ruminate on what has been revealed.[82] But beyond the limits given to human reason, silence is appropriate.[83] An encounter with the divine is the place for silence, a behavior modeled by Abraham, who did not respond to God's revelation by attempting to investigate the divine; rather, the patriarch remained silent.[84]

If human beings ought not to investigate God, if silence is the proper approach to the divine mystery, what, then, is the place of theological language? Clearly, for Ephrem, the prolific and eloquent poet-theologian about whom a later *Vita* recorded that he dreamt of vines sprouting from his tongue,[85] to speak of theological matters is absolutely

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[77] On Ephrem's understanding of silence and speech, see P.S. Russell, "Ephraem the Syrian on the Utility of Language and the Place of Silence," *JECS* 8 (2000): 21–37.

[78] *SdF* 2, 491–494.

[79] *HdF* 1, 18.

[80] *HdF* 38, 8–10.

[81] *HdF* 38, 13.

[82] *HdF* 38, 11.

[83] *HdF* 38, 16–18.

[84] *SdF* 3, 71–86; cf. *SdF* 2, 55–56.

[85] Palladius, *Lausiac History* 40C. This story is part of the additional material contained in the Syriac version, in R. Draguet, ed., *Les formes syriaques de la matière de l'Histoire lausiaque*, CSCO 398–399, Syr. 173–174 (1978), 289.

essential. There can be situations, he notes, when the choice of silence over speech would be blameworthy.[86] Speech and silence need to complement one another, and each must keep its proper place:

> Grant me, my Lord, that I may use both prudently.
> May I neither debate presumptuously, nor be silent ill-consideredly,
> but may I obtain advantageous eloquence and prudent silence.[87]

Although Ephrem rejects philosophical-theological attempts to define the divine nature, he nonetheless believes that human beings can achieve a limited understanding of God by interpreting that which has been revealed. In the *Discourse to Hypatius*, Ephrem expresses it as follows:

> For the deity gave us speech[88] that is free like itself, in order that free speech might serve our independent free will. And by speech, too, we are the likeness of the giver of it, inasmuch as by means of it we have impulse and thought for good things; and not only for good things, but we learn also of God, the source of good things, by means of speech (which is) a gift from (God).[89]

The human ability to speak of God is a divine gift, and it is essential that human beings take advantage of it. Human beings are endowed with language and thereby constituted in the *imago dei*: "For by this [that is, speech] which is like God we are clothed with the likeness of God … How great is speech, a gift which came to make those who receive it like its giver!"[90]

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[86] *HdF* 74, 20–21.

[87] *HdF* 1, 19.

[88] The Syriac ܡܠܬܐ, *meltā* has, as does the Greek λόγος, a wide range of meanings, including word, reason, speech, thought, discourse, and cause. J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903, reprint 1988).

[89] Ephrem, *First Discourse to Hypatius*, in S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque opera selecta (ed. J.J. Overbeck; Oxford: Clarendon, 1865), 21, 18–22, 5, trans. Mitchell, PR I, i–ii.

[90] Ephrem, *First Discourse to Hypatius*, 22, 5–6 and 22, 17–18. Ephrem continues the *Discourse to Hypatius* with more discussion of the role of speech.

6. *Divine names*

6.1. *Perfect names and borrowed names*

Central to Ephrem's understanding of God is his concept of divine names. By means of names God has revealed God's self and allowed humankind to approach the divine, yet at the same time the names denote the limit of human discourse on God. As mentioned earlier, for Ephrem there exists between creator and the creation a chasm that is insurmountable for humankind. Yet God reaches out towards the creation by a divine descent and by "clothing himself in names."[91] Indeed, God's taking on symbols and names is necessary for any communication between God and humankind.

> We should know that if (God) had not clothed himself in names
> of things, he would not have been able to speak
> with our humanity. In what is ours he drew near to us.
> (God) clothed himself in our names, so that we would be clothed in his.[92]

The divine descent into symbols in turn enabled the divinization, or *theosis*, of human nature; it made possible the ascent of humankind towards the divine.[93]

> (The Lord) gave us his names,
> he took from us our names.
> His names raised us up,
> but our names made him small.
> Blessed is he who has spread out
> your good name on his name,
> and has adorned with your name, his names.[94]

God's assuming lowly or small images does not indicate a change in the divine nature;[95] the immutable deity clothed itself in such images in

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[91] *HdF* 31, 1; cf. *CH* 32, 8; *CH* 34, 7. Clothing metaphors are discussed by S. Brock, "Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition," in Schmidt, *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie*, 11–38, reprinted in Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1992), no. XI.

[92] *HdF* 31, 2; cf. *SdF* 2, 651. In *Par.* 11, 7, Ephrem speaks of paradise being clothed in names and clarifies that his metaphors are not to be understood literally.

[93] On the subject of *theosis*, cf. for example J. Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers* (trans. P.A. Onica; Anaheim, CA: A & C Press, 2002). On Ephrem's understanding of the human ascent to God, see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 67–84.

[94] *HdF* 5, 7.

[95] *CH* 34, 7.

order to help the creatures and to save the sinner. The poet expresses this with a paradox:

> But if (God) had feared to become small,
> then (God) truly would have become small.
> In this, in not becoming small, (God) would have become small,
> as (God) became great and glorious on account of becoming small.[96]

Most of the names that God took on to communicate God's self to humankind are metaphoric: they reveal particular aspects of the Godhead, but one must take care not to focus exclusively on any one of these names,[97] or to give a literal meaning to the anthropomorphisms of Scripture. The poet is quite aware of the limits of symbolic discourse and warns his readers:

> Images are useful in some (respect),
> but in another (respect) they do not work.
> And neither does the mouth eat the peel
> with the fruit, although it is sweet.[98]

Anthropomorphic metaphors in Scripture, he emphasizes, intend to teach humanity about God, as for example biblical references to the ears or eyes of God serve to instruct people that God listens to and sees humankind.[99] Scriptural depictions of God as an old man, or as a warrior, simply serve pedagogical purposes[100] and do not convey the true nature of God, for God only at times took on such images, then took them off again.[101] Ephrem calls these metaphors, or anthropomorphisms, "borrowed" or "passing" names, names which are not images of the divine essence (*'itutā*).[102] Such homonyms he contrasted with the "perfect" and "accurate" names of God[103] which do convey true information about God's nature or essence.

The perfect names of God, Ephrem maintains, are more than metaphors: they reveal aspects of God's essence and must be taken at face value. In the forty-fourth *Hymn on Faith*, he lists five such perfect names of God.

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[96] *CH* 36, 5. Cf. *Virg.* 28, 11: "He is the glorious, immutable nature, but because of his love, he acquired changes." (trans. McVey).
[97] *Par.* 11, 6–7.
[98] *Eccl.* 34, 5.
[99] *HdF* 31, 1; Ps. 34, 15.
[100] *HdF* 31, 4; Dan 7:9 and Ex 15:3.
[101] *HdF* 31, 2–3.
[102] *HdF* 44, 2.
[103] *Eccl.* 7, 10 and the texts quoted below.

> (God's) names instruct you, how and what you should call him.
> One teaches you that he is *'ityā*, another that he is creator.
> He showed you that he is the gracious one, he signified to you that he also is the just one.
> Father, also, he was named and called.[104]

Ephrem's theology of names presupposes an inherent relation between the name and the object named—except, that is, in cases of "empty" names which do not have a corresponding reality.[105] Ephrem's theory of names can not be analyzed here in detail, but it should be noted that his approach, interestingly, does not differ so much from that of his opponent Eunomius, who likewise believes a name to have an inherent relation to the named entity, except in the case of homonyms. Aetius and Eunomius employ the theory of names in their trinitarian metaphysics, for instance in arguing that the *ousia* of the Son must be different from the Father's *ousia*, because both have different names.[106] In his *Apology*, Eunomius spells out his understanding of names.

> We do not understand his essence to be one thing and the meaning of the word which designates it to be something else. Rather, we take it that his substance is the very same as that which is signified by his name, granted that the designation applies properly to the essence.[107]

Concerning God's perfect names, Ephrem holds that they are interconnected and that none of them is dispensable. He warns his audience against neglecting any one of these divine names.

> Be careful with (God's) names, the perfect and holy ones.
> For if you deny one, all of them fly off and journey away.
> They are bound, one to the other, and they are carrying the universe.[108]

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[104] *HdF* 44, 1. Most of these "perfect names" also occur in *HdF* 58, 8, where Ephrem addresses God's goodness, justice, *'itutā*, and fatherhood. Cf. also *HdF* 60, 10, quoted below, where God is called *'itutā*, gracious one, just one, and Father.

[105] "Where (something) is not in *qnomā*, an empty name is placed in the middle. A thing which does not have *qnomā*, also its appellation is void. This *qnomā* teaches you that a thing exists in truth." (*SdF* 4, 53–58). Cf. *CGen* 1.1, ed. Tonneau, 8, 26f. Theory of names was much discussed in late antiquity, and many of the arguments ultimately go back to those set forth by Plato in his *Cratylus*. Cf. G.C. Stead, "Logic and the Application of Names to God," in *El "Contra Eunomium I" en la produccion literaria de Gregorio de Nisa* (ed. L.F. Mateo-Seco and L. Bastero; Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1988), 303–320. On Ephrem's theology of names, see Beck, *Reden*, 14–16; Bou Mansour, *Pensée symbolique*, 159–187.

[106] Hanson, *Search*, 606, 630–632.

[107] Eunomius, *Apol.* 12, trans. Vaggione.

[108] *HdF* 44, 3.

This argument is formulated with an apologetic purpose, intended to defend the title "Father" as indeed one of God's perfect names, a claim disputed by Eunomius and the Neo-Arians. Using the theory of names, Eunomius argues that the name "Father" when applied to God is a homonym, that is, that it has a different meaning than when used with regard to a human being, just as the metaphor "eye" should not be understood literally. To use Ephrem's terminology, Eunomius believes "Father" is among the "borrowed names."

> What well-disposed person would not acknowledge that there are some words which have only their sound and utterance in common but not at all their signification? For instance, "eye" is used of both human beings and God, but in the case of the one it signifies a certain bodily member while in the case of the other it means sometimes God's care and protection of the righteous, sometimes his knowledge of events.[109]
>
> Accordingly, it is by no means necessary, when God is called "Father," to understand this activity as having the same meaning that it does with human beings . . .[110]

The term "Son," Eunomius maintains, is likewise a homonym. Eunomius regards the Son as both a generated thing (γέννημα) and a made thing (ποίημα)—although certainly different from the rest of creation—and he rejects the homoiousian formula that the Son is like in essence to God.[111]

Ephrem's understanding of God centers on those attributes that he describes as perfect names, names that accurately describe the divine nature. Among perfect names Ephrem repeatedly mentions "being" (*'ityā*), "creator," "gracious one," "just one," and "Father,"[112] and each of these conveys insight into Ephrem's doctrine of God and shall now be addressed in turn.

6.2. *Being (*ʾityā *or* ʾitutā*)*

In his reflections on God, Ephrem often uses the Syriac terms ܐܝܬܝܐ (*'ityā*, "being") and ܐܝܬܘܬܐ (*'itutā*, "divine being") to designate the deity. *'ityā* and *'itutā* are derived from the Syriac particle ܐܝܬ (*'it*, to be, exist). *'itutā* constitutes a later formation than *'ityā*, and only *'ityā* can

[109] Eunomius, *Apol.* 16, trans. Vaggione.
[110] Eunomius, *Apol.* 17, trans. Vaggione; cf. the discussion by Kopecek, *History*, 322–329.
[111] Eunomius, *Apol.* 12 and 17; cf. Kopecek, *History*, 330.
[112] *HdF* 44, 1 quoted above, n. 104 with text.

take the plural form. These expressions underwent a transformation in the centuries prior to Ephrem. During the second and third centuries, *'ityā* designated any kind of being or essence and could, as for example in the theology of Bardaisan, designate an uncreated substance, the natural elements, or the planets.[113] By the time of Ephrem, however, *'ityā* and *'itutā* had come to designate exclusively the divine being.[114] The word *'ityā* corresponds to the Greek τὸ ὄν,[115] and Ephrem, like many other Syriac authors, associated *'ityā* with God's self-revelation to Moses recorded in Ex 3:14 (*'ehye 'šr 'ehye* "I am who I am"),[116] which the Septuagint renders as Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν. The Syriac Peshitta version transliterates the Hebrew *'ehye*,[117] which came to be identified with the Syriac *'ityā* or *'itutā*. Subsequently in ecclesiastical discourse *'ityā / 'itutā* is applied to God alone. This shift in terminology is one of the reasons why Ephrem so strongly objects to Bardaisan's theology. Bardaisan proposes the existence of one creator God, but assumes the pre-existence of several substances or *'itye* out of which the world was made. Ephrem understands this to imply the existence of several divine entities, an altogether unacceptable concept.

> Moses testified for us, for he did not give to another one
> the name *'itutā*. They were called "gods,"
> but they were not called *'itye*…
> To Moses (God) revealed the name: (God) called himself *'ehyeh*,
> which is the name of the *'itutā*. And never did (God) give
> this name to another one, as he gave his (other) names
> to the many, so that by the one name which he left out
> he would make known that only he is *'ityā*, and not another one.[118]

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[113] Bardaisan, *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, 12.8; 14.15; cf. *CH*. 51.13.

[114] The meaning of *'ityā* and *'itutā* is discussed in more detail by Beck, *Theologie*, 5–13; Beck, *Reden*, 1–4; B. Ehlers, "Bardesanes von Edessa—ein syrischer Gnostiker: Bemerkungen aus Anlaß des Buches von H.J.W. Drijvers, Bardaisan of Edessa," *ZKG* 81 (1970): 340f.; N. el-Khoury, *Die Interpretation der Welt bei Ephraem dem Syrer: Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1976), 42–49; Possekel, *Evidence*, 55–59. Aphrahat uses *'ityā* for God in *Dem.* 23.58 (Patrologia syriaca 1.2, 117.11f.). He uses *'itutā* as a term for God in *Dem.* 23.52 (PS 1.2, 100, 18f.); cf. Beck, *Theologie*, 8.

[115] Th. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* (2d ed.; reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), §199; Ehlers, "Bardesanes," 340, n. 9.

[116] E. Beck, *Ephräms des Syrers Psychologie und Erkenntnislehre*, CSCO 419, Sub. 58 (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 107.

[117] *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version*, ed. Peshitta Institute Leiden, vol. 1.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1977). Ephrem alludes to the passage in *HdF* 47, 10: "Again Moses the prophet, the glorious one, asked with fear concerning the name *'ehye*."

[118] *CH* 53, 11–12. For further remarks on the subject, see Possekel, *Evidence*, 55–59.

The expression *'itutā* functions for Ephrem as a synonym for *'ityā*, and in a trinitarian context *'itutā* refers to the oneness of the divine being. In the *Hymns on Faith*, he symbolically illustrates the mystery of the Trinity to his readers, then concludes: "Since it is difficult for you, behold, I illustrated for you: one who is of three, a Trinity, one *'itutā*."[119] The Godhead is *'itutā*, it is unchangeable[120] and everlasting.[121] Of the three persons of the Trinity, to be *'itutā* or *'ityā* is primarily said of the Father; the Son shares in the *'itutā* of the Father in virtue of his sonship: "The Father is perfect in his *'itutā*, also the first-born in his being begotten."[122] God as *'itutā* is the hidden, spiritual essence, unchangeable, and eternally existing in and of itself.[123]

6.3. *Creator*

Throughout his works, Ephrem stresses that the will of the omnipotent God was the sole cause of creation.[124] Not because God was in need of a creation did God fashion the world, but out of goodness. God, himself without beginning or end, gave all creatures their beginning and end.[125]

> (God) showed his strength when he created,
> for from nothing did he create everything.
> Again, (God) showed the wisdom of his plan,
> for he adorned and ordered, beautified and made perfect.
> Again, (God) showed his goodness,
> for without payment he made beautiful creatures, which he entrusted to Adam.[126]

Creation took place through the Son, whom Ephrem calls the "arm of his Father,"[127] but he is careful not to identify the Son with the Father's arm: "With his mouth is (the Son) when (the Father) commands, and with his arm when he establishes."[128]

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[119] *HdF* 73, 21.
[120] *PR* II, 119, 17–20; *PR* I, 91, 23–28.
[121] "An *'ityā* can not be destroyed, an *'ityā* can not be arranged. In that it is an *'ityā*, it can not be destroyed, in that it is an *'ityā*, it can not be arranged." (*PR* II, 157, 6–12).
[122] *SdF* 2, 1–2; cf. Beck, *Reden*, 1–2.
[123] "'*Itutā* besagt die unzugängliche, geistige Wesenheit Gottes, die immer aus sich selber existiert und alle Geschöpfe aus dem Nichts erschuf." (Beck, *Theologie*, 7; cf. el-Khoury, *Interpretation*, 73).
[124] *SdF* 5, 25–36.
[125] *Eccl.* 22, 1.
[126] *CH* 28, 8.
[127] *Eccl.* 22, 4.
[128] *SdF* 1, 75–76; cf. Beck, *Reden*, 30–31; el-Khoury, *Interpretation*, 81–92.

Ephrem develops the theme that God created the world on account of God's will in the fifth *Sermon on Faith*, where we find a somewhat curious defense of the immeasurability of God's creative power.[129] The world's actual size, he explains, does not mark God's limitation, but was chosen by God as most suitable for the work of salvation. Ephrem's reasoning here reflects his own intellectual horizon, for he regards Jerusalem as the center of the world and suggests that had God chosen to create a larger world, negative consequences for humankind would have resulted: the prophets' words would not have reached everyone; the world's citizens would have scattered too far; and there would have originated even more heresies.[130]

Ephrem needs to defend his theology of God as creator on three fronts: against the Marcionite claim that the good God was not the creator, against Bardaisan's theology of pre-existing substances, and against the Arian assertion that the Son was among the creatures. In both the *Hymns against Heresies* and the *Prose Refutations*, he rejects at length Marcionite dualism which distinguishes between the good god (the foreign one) and the creator, and which regards matter as evil. In the hymns, Ephrem often alludes to the healing miracles of the New Testament, which he interprets as evidence that the God who sent Jesus was also the creator, for why would Jesus otherwise have been concerned with healing bodies?[131] The argumentation in the hymns is thus biblically based and seems to be directed more towards his own congregation than towards contemporary Marcionites. In the *Prose Refutations*, however, Ephrem's reasoning takes a different course and more likely is addressed to adherents of Marcionism. Challenging the dualist doctrine on philosophical rather than on biblical grounds, he attacks as incoherent and illogical the Marcionite concept of the foreign god residing in a heaven he created for himself separated from and above the maker's heaven.[132]

Ephrem's polemic against Bardaisan on the one hand addresses terminology, in particular the expression *'ityā*, and on the other hand it focuses on the location of the pre-existing elements. Ephrem maintains that Bardaisan's own rejection of Marcionite dualism shows that Bar-

[129] Beck, *Reden*, 35, suggests this polemic is directed against some kind of gnosticizing dualist groups. Creation through God's will is also stated in *HdF* 26, 1.
[130] *SdF* 5, 25–152.
[131] *CH* 43, 18–25.
[132] *PR* I, 46–48.

daisan's idea of several *'ityе* is self-contradictory.[133] In a second, more cosmological argument, Ephrem wonders how the pre-existing elements could have been supported in the void.[134] It is in this context that Ephrem strongly asserts that God created from nothing,[135] a teaching which had become a widely held view by the time of Ephrem.

Against the Arians, Ephrem defends the doctrine that creation took place through the Son. Repeatedly, he asserts that the Son was united to the Father during the process of creation, and that hence the Son could not possibly be regarded as a creature. The poet offers his readers Scriptural evidence for the Son's work of creation through his exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis. The divine command "let there be light," he notes, must have been directed to Christ the first-born, for there was not yet anything else.

> But in the beginning the works
> were created through the first-born.
> For "God said:
> 'let there be light'," and it was created.
> Whom, then, did he command?
> For behold, nothing (yet) existed.
> But if he commanded the light?
> Not "become" did he command,
> but he said "let there be."
> For different is the word
> "become" from "let there be."[136]

This passage in the *Hymns on Faith* is strikingly similar to Athanasius' comments in *Against the Pagans*,[137] and it once again shows Ephrem's theological arguments to resemble contemporary approaches in the Greek-speaking world. Ephrem continues his exegesis by observing that

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[133] *CH* 3, 2–4 and see the discussion on Ephrem's understanding of *'ityā* above.

[134] *PR* I, 52–54, 57–60.

[135] Ephrem maintains the creation from nothing against Bardaisan in *PR* I, 58, 29–41.

[136] *HdF* 6, 6; Gen 1:3. Cf. *Nat.* 8, 10, where Ephrem states that through Jesus the world was created.

[137] "For one could ask them with whom was God speaking that he should give commands. If he was giving commands and speaking to created beings, his words would be superfluous; for they had not yet come into being, but were about to be created. And no one speaks to a non-existent person, nor commands and speaks to someone not yet brought into existence. If God were giving commands to impending beings, then he should have said: 'Become, heaven,'… So there was necessarily someone with him, to whom he spoke when making the universe. Who then could it be except his Word …?" Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 46 (*Athanasius, Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. R.W. Thomson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) tr. Thomson.

the plural used in the account of the creation of humankind in Gen 1:26 clearly indicates that creation took place through the Son.

> (God) revealed (and) made known the first-born
> when he created Adam.
> "Let us make humankind
> in our image, according to our likeness."[138]

This could not possibly have been spoken to Adam, Ephrem affirms, but demonstrates that Christ, the savior, is also the creator. "The Father commanded with (his) voice, the Son accomplished the deed."[139] The creation through the Son is of salvation-historical significance, for only the creator could be the redeemer, a thought central also to the theology of Athanasius.[140] Addressing Christ in the twentieth *Hymn on the Church*, the Syrian writes:

> This also is certain that through you
> the universe was created by the wink of your begetter.
> As it was fashioned by you
> so also it was renewed by you.
> On you depends the universe in every way.[141]

In the *Hymns on the Nativity*, Ephrem expresses the theme of creation through the Son with poetic imagination.

> Carpenters came because of Joseph
> to the son of Joseph. "Blessed is your offspring,
> the chief of carpenters, by whom was drawn
> even the ark. By him was constructed
> the temporal tabernacle that was [only] for a time."[142]

6.4. *"Just one" and "gracious one"*

The two expressions ܙܕܝܩܘܬܐ (justice) and ܛܝܒܘܬܐ (goodness or grace) usually occur together in Ephrem's writings and constitute one of his basic theological paradigms.[143] The one God is both just and

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[138] *HdF* 6, 7; Gen 1:26. See el-Khoury, *Interpretation*, 92–96. Ephrem also opposes the thesis that God addressed the angels (*HdF* 6, 8; cf. Beck, *Reden*, 27).

[139] *HdF* 6, 13.

[140] Athanasius, *De incarnatione* 1.

[141] *Eccl.* 20, 11.

[142] *Nat.* 8, 10; translation adapted from McVey, who notes the usage of both ark and tabernacle as cosmological symbols within Judaism and Syriac Christianity (*Ephrem*, 121, n. 251).

[143] On the biblical terminology, see Martikainen, *Gerechtigkeit und Güte Gottes*, 4–9.

gracious, the Syrian theologian affirms, and at length he refutes the Marcionite separation of these terms and their attribution to two divine entities.

> Marcion was confused, who erred and led astray—But there is not another (god).
> One is (God) whose names resemble his deed.
> (God) creates and sustains us, and he judges and has pity on us,
> and he leads and possesses us, and he redeems and saves us.
> His judgment is from (his) justice, his mercy (ܪܚܡܐ) is from (his) goodness (ܛܝܒܘܬܐ).
> And where is the foreign one?[144]

The true God is both creator and redeemer, the true God in his perfection is both just and good.

> For justice
> without grace is incomplete,
> as also grace
> is in need of justice …
> In your goodness and in your justice,
> my Lord, is shown the beauty of your perfection.[145]

Sometimes God acts according to God's justice, at other times according to God's goodness, but the relation between justice and grace ultimately remains a mystery incomprehensible to the human mind. On occasion, Ephrem attributes to God's justice the disasters that have befallen humankind, interpreting misfortune as pedagogically intended divine warnings, aimed at bringing people back from their error. The sufferings of the Nisibenes, for instance, he attributes to the Christian failure to live peaceful and devout lives.[146]

Although always considering God's justice together with God's grace, Ephrem sees God as primarily the gracious and merciful one whose divine goodness often prevails over divine justice. Adam's fall, for example, called for a just execution of the punishment, but by God's mercy Adam was allowed to live for another nine hundred and thirty

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144 *CH* 50, 1.

145 *CH* 37, 9. This section is anti-Marcionite polemic.

146 *SdF* 6, 345–390. See also Ephrem's interpretation of the destruction of the city Nikomedia by an earthquake in 358, subject of several *madrāše* preserved only in Armenian, in which he attempts to interpret the event in terms of God's justice and grace. On this, see Martikainen, *Gerechtigkeit und Güte Gottes*, 131–142. In this case, Ephrem maintains that the city was not destroyed because of sin, and that the true reason for the disaster is known only to God.

years.[147] God's justice and God's grace for Ephrem always go hand in hand, and never is one without the other.

6.5. *Father*

Along with the name *'ityā*, the title "Father" is of central importance for Ephrem. Recognizing the importance of the epithet πατήρ in the New Testament writings and its function in Christian liturgical practice, the Syrian vehemently refutes Eunomius' view that the name "Father" is not to be applied literally to God, that it is a homonym. For Eunomius, only designations such as "I am" and "only true God" could adequately describe God's essence.[148] Against the Neo-Arians Ephrem defends the notion that the appellation "Father" is among the "perfect names" and conveys the true nature of God.

> Why, then, would he who is the Father of truth be compelled
> —without having begotten the begotten one—to give the names "Father" and "Son"?[149]

The frequency of the term in the New Testament proves, he asserts, that it must be one of the perfect names.[150] Otherwise, God would be leading us astray, or would deliberately misrepresent himself, which would altogether be unsuitable for the true one.[151] All the true divine names reveal God's nature.

> For who could compare the names of the holy one
> who agrees with himself in every (name): in (the name) *'ityā* with his *'itutā*,
> in (the name) "just one" with his justice; in (the name) "good one" with his goodness—
> he agrees with these. And how could his fatherhood be at variance,
> because he would disagree with himself if he had no begotten one,
> the glorious one who (came) from his womb.[152]

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[147] *PR* II, 60, 3–31.

[148] "On the other hand, the majority of words [referring to God] are different in their verbal expression but have the same meaning, as for instance, 'I AM', and 'only true God'." (Eunomius, *Apol.* 17, trans. Vaggione).

[149] *HdF* 60, 2.

[150] On the usage of πατήρ in the New Testament, see G. Schrenk, "πατήρ," *ThWNT* 5 (1984): 981–1016; W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), s. v. πατήρ.

[151] *HdF* 60, 2. The title "true one" for God was accepted by the Neo-Arians, cf. Eunomius, *Apol.* 17.

[152] *HdF* 60, 10.

Moreover, baptismal practices and the creed necessitate that the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be true names, that they accurately describe the divinity, for "Who could be baptized with borrowed names? Who could confess with borrowed names?"[153]

7. *Other metaphors for God*

In addition to the perfect names of God, Ephrem employs a vast number of other metaphors for God. Although these would be considered among God's borrowed names, they do convey important insights into God's nature, and they provide useful vehicles for theological explanations. The image of physician is used particularly creatively by Ephrem and deserves some attention. The relation between God and space was a problem raised by the dualist sects and challenges Ephrem to address a more philosophical aspect of the doctrine of God. Moreover, the Syrian poet frequently relates female metaphors to God.

7.1. *God the physician*

Ephrem often employs the physician image to describe God's relation to humankind or Christ's work of salvation.[154] He also uses the related metaphors of medicine, or "medicine of life," to denote the teaching of Jesus or the Eucharist.[155] God the physician sent God's words as medicines. Underlying Ephrem's usage of the physician symbol is his understanding of sin as a wound or fatal disease.[156] Adam and Eve in disobedience of the divine command picked the fruit of deadly poison,[157] and subsequently humankind suffered from a serious ailment. In the *Hymns against Heresies*, Ephrem compares the world to a body sick with error and God to the kind physician who bandages and heals

[153] *HdF* 62, 13.

[154] For the christological imagery, which can only be mentioned in passing here, see *Nat.* 3, 20; *HdF* 36, 1; 54, 4; *Eccl.* 38, 19; *SDN* 24.2; 42; 44; *Virg.* 30, 9f. The *Christus medicus* motif is discussed by Bou Mansour, *Pensée symbolique*, 259–271. On Ephrem's healing imagery in general, see A. Shemunkasho, *Healing in the Theology of Saint Ephrem* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2002).

[155] References to Christ's teaching as medicine occur in *SDN* 15; *HdF* 2, 19; *CNis* 34, 10; references to the Eucharist can be found in *Nat.* 3, 15; *Virg.* 31, 13; *HdF* 12, 8.

[156] *Nat.* 22, 3.

[157] *Eccl.* 19, 7.

its wounds.[158] God sent prophets, apostles, and other biblical figures as physicians who, by means of their words, administered medicines to their contemporaries.[159] All these physicians, however, could not cure the world, and therefore God sent Christ through whose medicine of life healing was accomplished.

> But the physicians with their medicines were insufficient for the world.
> The all-sufficient physician saw this, and he had mercy.
> He cut from his own body, he put (a bandage) on his own suffering,
> and he healed our suffering. With his body and his blood,
> he cured our wound. Praise be to the medicine of life
> which suffices and heals the diseases of souls with his teaching.[160]

Within this general salvation-historical frame, Ephrem uses the physician metaphor in various ways to illustrate certain aspects of the Godhead, especially God's grace and love towards humankind. For Ephrem, God is the kind physician who heals gently. His usage of the physician image thereby markedly differs from that of other church fathers, who often relate the physician's painful treatment to Christian suffering or to penitence.[161] Ephrem, however, contrasts worldly physicians with God's gentle healing.

> The physicians of the world are (only) able to heal with pain.
> Their hand is much feared by the wounded.
> The touch of your hand, my Lord, is much loved by our wound.
> For even your finger is the touch of mercy.
> Blessed is he from whose blessed and mild garments
> a power went out and healed gently.[162]

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[158] "Regard the world as a body whose diseases increased because of his freedom. But it is entrusted to one kind physician who cauterizes and cuts because of love. Wherever (God) turns it, (God) will bandage it, and wherever (God) touches it, (God) will heal it." (*CH* 39, 6).

[159] *SdF* 3, 153–158. God sent physicians to cure the sick world, including Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Daniel. On these, see Shemunkasho, *Healing*, 344–373. T. Kronholm, "Abraham, the Physician: The Image of Abraham the Patriarch in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem Syrus," in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Z. Zevit et al. (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 107–115 discusses the relation between Ephrem's view of Abraham and rabbinic exegesis.

[160] *CNis* 34, 10. Cf. *HdF* 36, 1: "The Son descended to heal the servants who for long had suffered their diseases." See also *SdF* 4, 191–192.

[161] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 5, ed. A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa, CSEL 20 (1890), 154–155.

[162] *CNis* 34, 12; cf. *CNis* 6, 1; 11, 3–4; *Eccl.* 31, 1.

Among the many New Testament healing stories, two episodes concerning women particularly inspired the Syrian poet.[163] Regarding the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage (Matt 9:18–26), Ephrem stresses Christ's healing her for free and without causing her the shame she suffered from having to unclothe herself in front of worldly physicians.[164] In the story of the woman in the Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36–50), Ephrem interprets her tears as the medicine which she herself brought and by which the divine physician healed her soul.[165]

The physician image further enables Ephrem to formulate an answer to the theological problem of God's changing commands to humankind, a challenge faced by many early Christian authors. God's immutability needed to be reconciled to God's diverse laws contained in Scripture, and Ephrem approaches the task symbolically.

> They (that is, prophets) offered every medicine
> to the disease of feebleness.
> There are laws which came to an end,
> for the former sickness no longer exists.
> But there are other (laws) which continue,
> because the sickness continues.
> Apostles and prophets (were)
> physicians of souls;
> according to the sufferings of humankind
> they brought help.
> According to the diseases which (occurred) in their age
> they offered medicines.
> Their medicines served
> the last ones and the first ones.
> There are diseases (which occur) in one generation,
> there are diseases (which occur) always.
> For new diseases which happened, they gave new medicines.
> For the ongoing diseases of all generations,
> they gave ongoing medicines.[166]

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[163] On Ephrem's attention to and interpretation of female biblical characters, see Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 168–172; E. Beck, "Der syrische Diatessaronkommentar zu der Perikope von der Samariterin am Brunnen," *OrChr* 74 (1990): 1–24; idem, "Der syrische Diatessaronkommentar zu der Perikope von der Sünderin, Luc. 7, 36–50," *OrChr* 75 (1991): 1–15; J.R. Jensen, "Ruth According to Ephrem the Syrian," in *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* (ed. A. Brenner; 3 vols; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 170–176.

[164] *CNis* 27, 2; *Eccl.* 38, 19. The healing for free can be regarded as an anti-Marcionite emphasis, for Marcion stated that the Son bought back the souls from the creator.

[165] *SDN* 44; cf. *SDN* 14.

[166] *SdF* 3, 147–166; cf. *Eccl.* 28, 17; 43, 5 f.; 52, 6.

Some of the divine commandments, he explains, were intended only to resolve problems of a particular age and had no lasting value, whereas others addressed ongoing human concerns and continue to remain binding for the Christian.

7.2. *God and space*

Ephrem not only poetically reflects on God's relation to the world, he also enters the more philosophical debate about God's relation to space in order to refute the Marcionite, Bardaisanite, and Manichaean challenges to Christian thought.[167] Marcionites believed that the good god, the foreign one, had created for himself a heaven above the heaven and had remained there until the good god chose to reveal himself through sending Christ.[168] Marcionite dualism was heretical to Ephrem, and the concept of a god who remained in a separate space and did not encompass the universe was unacceptable.[169] Moreover, Manichaean theories of two divine entities who initially occupied separate spaces called for a refutation.[170] Finally, the followers of Bardaisan gave space an elevated position within their cosmogony and may have called it *ʾitutā*.[171] It is thus with an apologetic intention that Ephrem reflects on God's relation to space.

Ephrem understands space as that which limits other bodies, that which causes their finitude, and hence he has to define the relation between the unlimited God and limiting space.[172] Is God within or outside of space? Clearly, God could not be enclosed by space, since "there is no space which encompasses and encloses (God)."[173]

> For if (God) dwelt in space,
> he would be small in his greatness.
> For there would be something greater than he
> who is found to dwell in space.[174]

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167 On the subject, see Possekel, *Evidence*, 127–154.
168 *PR* I, 44–45.
169 *CH* 32; *CH* 35.
170 *PR* I, 130–132; *CH 16*.
171 *PR* I, 133, 20–28.
172 *PR* I, 130, 24–37; 131, 32–47; 132, 30–41.
173 *HdF* 45, 8; cf. *HdF* 30, 1.
174 *HdF* 45, 4.

God is for Ephrem that which encloses, but is not enclosed.[175] God is congruous with space: "And because of this, that greatness which the (heretical) teachings give to space, the teaching of truth gives to God, because (God) is (God's) own space (ܬܦܫܐ ܕܐܬܪܐ, *'atrā d-nefšeh*)."[176] The Marcionite concept of God leaving God's previously occupied space does not make sense, he asserts.

> The nature of the (divine) essence
> never became smaller or greater,
> for it is not a composition
> which undergoes change.
> One is who does not decrease,
> one is who does not increase,
> for he entirely fills the universe.
> There is no space inside of him into which he might enter,
> and there is no space outside of him into which he might go out.[177]

Ephrem's notion that God is enclosing the universe, but not being enclosed, can be found in Hellenistic Jewish and Christian literature as well,[178] but the formula of God being God's own space to my knowledge only occurs in the writings of Philo and Theophilus, and it may have been through the writings of the latter that Ephrem became acquainted with this phrase.[179]

7.3. *Female metaphors for God*

Throughout his poetry, Ephrem employs various female metaphors to describe the incarnation, God's relation to the world, and the Christian

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[175] *HdF* 30, 1.

[176] *PR* I, 132, 42–133, 1. The expression *'atrā d-nefšeh* also occurs in *PR* I 59, 38–39.

[177] *CH* 32, 14.

[178] For example, Philo, *De somniis* 1.63, ed. with English trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, *Philo*, vol. 5, LCL (1934); *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mand. 1, ed. with English trans. J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*, second ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.1.2, ed. with English trans. Lightfoot and Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers*. On the subject, see also W.R. Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (ed. W.R. Schoedel and R.T. Wilken; Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 75–86.

[179] Philo, *De somniis* 1.64; Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 2.3 (ed. R.M. Grant; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 24. We do not know with what texts Ephrem was familiar, except from inferences from his writings. Neither do we know which Greek texts may have been translated into Syriac by the time of Ephrem, for the oldest extant Syriac manuscript dates to the year 411.

liturgical and spiritual life.[180] Although he does not explicitly refer to God or to Christ as "mother," his imagery clearly attributes that role to the deity. Many epithets that Ephrem applies to the Godhead originate from the female body and its reproductive activity; other images relate to particularly female activities such as weaving, or the female "hovering over her young."[181]

Regarding metaphors derived from a woman's body, the concepts of "womb" (ܟܒܪ), "giving birth" (ܝܠܕ), and "nursing" (ܢܩܐ) figure prominently in Ephrem's poetry.[182] The "womb of the deity" is the place where the Son resides from eternity. From the womb of the deity the Son came forth in a "first birth," and in a "second birth," the incarnation, the Son came forth from Mary.[183] In contexts in which Ephrem speaks of the Son's birth from, or his residing in, the womb of the deity, he avoids masculine nouns such as Father or God to denote that in whose womb Christ was; instead, he uses feminine abstract nouns such as "deity" (ܐܠܗܘܬܐ), or the term "parent" (ܐܝܠܐ) to achieve a more consistent image.[184]

> If someone seeks your hidden nature,
> behold, it is in heaven in the great womb
> of the deity (ܐܠܗܘܬܐ, *'alāhutā*). And if someone seeks
> your revealed body, behold it lays low and looks out
> from the small womb of Mary.[185]

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[180] On the subject of female images, cf. K.E. McVey, "Ephrem The Syrian's Use of Female Metaphors to Describe the Deity," *ZAC* 5 (2001), 261–288. On the usage of the metaphor "mother" in early Syriac literature and its application to the Holy Spirit in some texts, see S.P. Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature," in *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*, ed. J.M. Soskice (London: Collins, 1990), 73–88; R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 142–150, 312–320.

[181] The last two can not be discussed here. The imagery of weaving occurs for example in *Nat.* 21, 5: "Divinity in the womb wove itself a garment." On the subject, see McVey, "Female Metaphors," 276–279; on "hovering," see Murray, *Symbols*, 313–314 and passim; McVey, "Female Metaphors," 261, n. 2.

[182] In addition to the article by McVey, see Bou Mansour, *Pensée symbolique*, 81–83, 133 (on womb). Womb imagery abounds in Ephrem's *Nat.* 21, 5–8 and 21.

[183] "I confess your first birth, hidden and concealed from all creatures. I also confess your second birth, revealed and younger than all creatures which came into existence through you." (*Nat.* 27, 19); see McVey, "Female Metaphors," 263.

[184] The "womb of the deity" occurs in *Nat.* 13, 7 quoted below. See McVey, "Female Metaphors," 264 with notes.

[185] *Nat.* 13, 7; cf. *HdF* 3, 13. "The Word of the Father came from the womb (of the Father), and put on a body in another womb." (*Res.* 1, 7).

Yet it is for Ephrem the Father who gave birth to the Son, as several passages illustrate.[186] Birth from the "womb of the deity" could relate either to the generation of the Son,[187] or to the incarnation: "He flew from the womb of the deity to humanity."[188]

The divine womb has cosmic significance as well, for it is said to contain and encompass the world. At the time of the incarnation, while the Son took shape in Mary's womb, all of creation dwelt in the divine womb.[189] Womb metaphors can describe God's encompassing the cosmos, and they also enable Ephrem to explain why the natural world is replete with divine symbols: As Mary gave birth to Christ, so did all of creation.

> The creation conceived his symbols, Mary conceived his limbs.
> Therefore many wombs brought forth the only begotten.
> The belly gave birth to him by pangs, and also the creation gave birth to him by symbols.[190]

Yet conversely, it is also Christ who gives birth in that he redeems and renews a person in the second birth at baptism. Although, as was noted already, Ephrem avoids applying the epithet "mother" to God or to a person of the Trinity,[191] he attributes to the deity the female activity of giving birth. In the *Hymns on the Nativity*, Mary praises this mystery:

> Son of the heavenly one, who came and dwelt in me
> and I became his mother. And as I gave birth to him,
> he gave birth to me (in) another birth,
> a second birth …[192]

A second peculiarly female activity, that of nursing a child, becomes for Ephrem a welcome image to describe how God nourishes and sustains the creation.

> The deity is attentive to us, just as a wetnurse is to a baby,
> keeping back for the right time things that will benefit it,

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186 *HdF* 4, 17; 60, 7.
187 *HdF* 60, 7; *Res.* 1, 7; cf. McVey, "Female Metaphors," 263.
188 *Nat.* 27, 15.
189 "As he dwelt in the womb of his mother, all creatures dwell in his womb." (*Nat.* 4, 154). "While the fetus of the Son was being formed in the womb (ܒܛܢܗ), he formed babes in the womb." (*Nat.* 4, 161; cf. *Nat.* 4, 174). On this subject, see McVey, "Female Metaphors," 270–273; Bou Mansour, *Pensée symbolique*, 133.
190 *Virg.* 6, 7–8.
191 Ephrem does not apply the metaphor "mother" to the Holy Spirit, but his contemporary Aphrahat does, *Dem.* 18.10, PS 1.1, 840, 12.
192 *Nat.* 16, 11.

> for she knows the right time for weaning,
> and when the child should be nourished with milk,
> and when it should be fed with solid bread,
> weighing out and providing what is beneficial to it
> in accordance with the measure of its growing up.[193]

In the fourth *Hymn on the Nativity*, Mary expresses her astonishment at her motherhood of Christ who sustains all.

> He (that is, Christ) was lying, and he nursed the milk of Mary,
> but all creatures are nursing from his good.
> He is the living breast of living breath.
> From his life the dead ones nursed and lived (again) …
> While he was nursing from the milk of Mary,
> he nursed the universe (with) life …
> He gave the milk to Mary as God.
> In turn, he sucked it from her as human being.[194]

8. *The Trinity*

8.1. *Terminology and the Syrian theology of names*

The Council of Nicaea in 325, attended by several bishops of the Syriac-speaking regions, affirmed the Christian faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it described the Son as ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί, of the same essence as the Father.[195] How was this terminology translated into Syriac? The earliest Syriac version of the Nicene creed, which shows significant discrepancies from the Greek text of 325, is contained in the canons of the Persian synod that convened in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410.[196] This text renders the Greek phrase ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός as as ܕܡܢ ܥܝܬܘܬܐ ܕܐܒܐ (from the *'itutā* of the Father), and ὁμοούσιος as ܒܪ ܟܝܢܐ (*bar kyānā*, of the same nature).[197] These expressions

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[193] *Eccl.* 25, 18, translation quoted from Brock, "Holy Spirit as Feminine," 83–84 (slightly adapted).

[194] *Nat.* 4, 149–150, 153, 185.

[195] Denzinger, *Enchiridion* 125.

[196] The canons are ed. with French trans. by J.-B. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, ou, *recueil de synodes nestoriens* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1902) 17–23, 254–263; the creed is at the end of the document. A new edition of the creed has been produced by A. Vööbus, "New Sources for the Symbol in Early Syrian Christianity," *VC* 26 (1972): 291–296.

[197] Ed. Vööbus, 295, l. 8 and l. 13. For the second phrase, Chabot's edition reads ܕܒ ܟܝܢܐ ܕܐܒܐ and ܟܝܢܐ ܕܒ, respectively (22, l. 26 and 28). Aithallaha's letter also contained a version of the creed, but since it is only preserved in Armenian, it can

hardly occur in Ephrem's writings, perhaps partially because they had not yet become common phrases among Syriac Christians.[198] A more fundamental reason for the absence of this Nicene terminology from his works is that for Ephrem there is no term available that would correspond to the Greek word *ousia*. The expressions *'ityā* and *'itutā*, which are used by later theologians to denote *ousia*, are for Ephrem God's proper names, names that could not function as designations for general concepts such as *ousia*.[199] The Syriac words *kyānā* (nature) and *qnomā* (substance or hypostasis) acquire technical meanings in later Syriac literature, but Ephrem does not use them in a terminologically consistent way.[200] The Syriac word for "Trinity," (ܬܠܝܬܝܘܬܐ, *tlitāyutā*), occurs only seldom in Ephrem's works, and it does not have the technical sense of a "Trinity" of the divine persons. Rather, *tlitāyutā* designates the threeness within the trinitarian image which Ephrem unfolds, namely the threeness of the sun, its light, and its warmth.[201]

Rather than approach the question of the Trinity by means of philosophical terminology, the Syrian authors generally focus on a theology of names. Besides Ephrem, both Aphrahat and Aithallaha formulate a trinitarian theology based on the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,[202] in which the divine names refer to God's self-revelation and function as means by which human beings can approach the divine. The theology of names developed by the Syrian theologians must not be confused with the position of Modalist Monarchians, who regard the

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not aid in the discussion of terminology. The creed is translated into German by Bruns, "Brief Aithallahas," 121–122; on its interpretation cf. Bruns, "*Aithallahas Brief*," 48–53.

[198] *Bar 'itutā* in the sense of *homoousios* occurs only once in Ephrem's genuine works, in the *Commentary on the Diatessaron* 13.8, ed. L. Leloir, *Saint Éphrem, Commentaire de l'évangile concordant* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1963), 108, 4, English trans.: *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* (trans. C. McCarthy; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). P. Bruns suggests this may be an interpolation, "Arius hellenizans?—Ephräm der Syrer und die neoarianischen Kontroversen seiner Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeption des Nizänums im syrischen Sprachraum," *ZKG* 101 (1990): 26.

[199] On this subject, see Beck, *Trinitätslehre*, 118 and passim.

[200] On Ephrem's usage of *kyānā* and *qnomā*, see Beck, *Reden*, 4–14; Beck, *Theologie*, 13–22; el-Khoury, *Interpretation*, 42–49.

[201] A detailed analysis of Ephrem's usage of *tlitāyutā* can be found in Beck, *Trinitätslehre*, 76–78, esp. 77. The word does not at all occur in the *Prose Refutations* or in the *Sermon on Our Lord*. In one instance, Ephrem used *tlitāyutā* in a non-trinitarian context to denote the three contributions of the Nisibene bishops (*CNis* 13, 3; cf. Beck, *Trinitätslehre*, 77).

[202] Aphrahat, *Dem.* 23.63, PS 1.2, 133, 3–8. On Aithallaha, see Bruns, "Brief Aithallahas," 122 (German trans.; ed. *Thorossian*, 45) and Bruns, "*Aithallahas Brief*," 52.

divine names of "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" as only temporary expressions or modes of the activity of the one God.[203] For Ephrem the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not different modes of God, for each name implies the real existence (*qnomā*) of the subject referred to.[204]

> The root of the name is the *qnomā*, to it the names are bound.
> For who would give a name to a thing which does not have *qnomā*?[205]

He asserts that Christians should confess the names of the three divine persons and not inquire into their natures.

> Everyone knows that the Father exists,
> but how he is, no one knows.
> We all confess that the Son exists,
> but how and how much, we can not comprehend.
> Everyone confesses the Holy Spirit,
> (but) no one is capable of his inquiry.[206]

The divine names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit thus define the limits of human investigation, beyond which one must not venture.

> Father and Son and Holy Spirit
> are comprehended in their names.
> Do not study their substances (*qnome*),
> contemplate their names!
> If you investigate the substance, you will perish,
> but if you believe in the name, you will live.
> Let the name of the Father be the limit for you,
> do not transgress, do not investigate his nature.
> Let the name of the Son be a wall for you,
> do not transgress, do not investigate his begetting.
> Let the name of the Spirit be a fence for you,
> do not enter into its investigation.
> Let the names be limits for you,
> with the names restrain the questions.[207]

In a number of texts, Ephrem ranks the members of the Trinity, and it must be asked if this represents a subordinationist trinitarian theology.

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[203] On Monarchian Modalism, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 119–123; R. Lyman, "Monarchianism," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* 2 (1997), 764–765.

[204] Ephrem's doctrine of the Trinity is discussed by Beck, *Reden*, 21–41; Beck, *Trinitätslehre*; Bou Mansour, *Pensée symbolique*, 159–221.

[205] *SdF* 2, 585–588.

[206] *SdF* 4, 159–164.

[207] *SdF* 4, 129–142; cf. *SdF* 4, 41–46; *CH* 6, 15.

Believe that the Father is first!
Confirm (that) the Son is second!
And do not doubt
that the Holy Spirit is third![208]

Although, at first sight, the Syrian here seems to have subordinated the Holy Spirit to the Son, and the Son to the Father, he elsewhere clearly maintains that all three persons of the Trinity are equal and eternal. Moreover, his emphasis on the eternal generation of the Son[209] and his stress upon the unity of Father and Son preclude a subordinationist position.[210] Regarding the Holy Spirit, Ephrem maintains its divinity and argues that the Holy Spirit has always been with God.[211] The ranking of the divine persons, as in the passage quoted above, is a result of Ephrem's considerations about the inner-trinitarian relationships. The Son is the Father's first-born, he is sitting to his right and does not take the Father's position. The Spirit is sent by the Son and does not claim the Son's position.[212] In the *Hymns on Faith*, Ephrem explains the ordering of the divine persons by a reference to Jesus' commissioning of the disciples (Matt 28:19):

"Make disciples and baptize in the three names,
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
For the name of the Son can not precede
the name of the Father, for there is no confusion.[213]

In baptism the names of the divine persons are equal and form a unity: "The names of Father and Son and Spirit are equal and in concord in the descent at baptism."[214]

8.2. *Images of the Trinity*

The Godhead is three and it is one, and how exactly this could be Ephrem does not try to solve conceptually. Instead, he approaches the trinitarian mystery symbolically. The two most prominent trinitarian

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[208] *SdF* 4, 173–176. A very similar passage is *HdF* 23, 13. See also *SdF* 2, 605–612.
[209] In *Nat.* 25, 13, the poet clearly stated this: "Blessed are you, Bethlehem, in whom was the beginning for the Son, who is in the Father from eternity." (trans. McVey).
[210] *HdF* 32, 16; *SdF* 1, 77–78. The divinity of the Son is stated in *HdF* 73, 6; 76, 8; and *CH* 55, 2 quoted above n. 24 with text.
[211] *CH* 3, 10–11. *HdF* 74 focuses on the roles of the Holy Spirit.
[212] *SdF* 4, 177–184.
[213] *HdF* 23, 14.
[214] *HdF* 77, 20; cf. *CH* 3, 13.

images in Ephrem's works are both taken from nature: the plant (or tree) and its fruit; and the sun (or fire), its light, and its warmth.

The obviously binary image of the plant and its fruit is intended to show the unity of Son and Father against the Arian and Neo-Arian challenges to the divinity of the second person; the absence of the Holy Spirit from this image is thus a result of Ephrem's apologetic concern. Ephrem develops the image of the plant (ܐܝܠܢ) and its fruit (ܦܐܪܐ) in the second *Sermon on Faith*.[215] He introduces the image in the beginning, and after a long refutation of Arianism, explores it more fully towards the sermon's end. The plant, symbolizing the Father, and the fruit, representing the Son, are both perfect.[216] Out of love, the plant passes on its hidden sweetness to the fruit, which in turn out of love offers its sweetness to humankind.[217] As this image enables the poet to illustrate the revelation through the Son, so it could also symbolize the unity, yet distinction, of Father and Son. Plant and fruit are not the same, yet they do form a unity.[218] And as the two names "fruit" and "plant" point to two really existing things (*qnome*), likewise the names of Father and Son indicate two realities.[219] Useful as this metaphor is, Ephrem recognizes its limits, for it could not adequately express the Son's incarnation.

> For the fruit is hanging on its tree,
> and if one picks it, it departs from (the tree).
> It is not able to be on its tree
> while being with its taker.
> But the first-born is with his Father.
> He remained with him, and he came to us.[220]

Ephrem's most advanced trinitarian image is that of the sun (or fire), its light (or ray), and its warmth. The metaphor of the sun and its light or ray is employed by Greek and Latin Christian writers as well, often to designate the unity of Father and Son.[221] In Ephrem's writings, however, the analogy goes beyond its binary structure, for the Syrian adds

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[215] The image of tree or plant and its fruit also occurs in *HdF* 76. In *HdF* 77, 17–19, Ephrem attempts to add a third component to the image, the root.
[216] *SdF* 2, 5–6.
[217] *SdF* 2, 15–32.
[218] *SdF* 2, 621–622.
[219] *SdF* 2, 623–652.
[220] *SdF* 2, 685–690.
[221] The usage of this image in the writings of Greek and Latin fathers is discussed by Beck, *Trinitätslehre*, 1–24.

"warmth" as a third component to signify the Holy Spirit and thereby presents a much more suitable trinitarian metaphor.[222] He develops the image of sun, light, and warmth in the *Hymns on Faith* which appear to have been composed at a time when the divinity of the Holy Spirit had become a more contested issue. By means of this image, Ephrem expresses his belief in the equality and eternity of all three divine persons.

> The sun is our lamp, and every one is insufficient for it,
> how much more for a person, and more for God.
> For the brightness of the sun is not younger than it,
> and there was no time when it was not.
> Its light as second and its warmth as third
> do not fall short of it, but neither are they equal to it.[223]

The phrase "that there was no time when (the light) was not" appears to be an explicit rejection of the Arian ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν (there was, when he was not).

Ephrem uses the image of sun, light, and warmth predominantly to make plausible the trinitarian mystery that three is one. The sun is always mixed with its light and warmth, yet clearly they are separate phenomena.

> Fire or sun are single natures;
> three matters are mixed in them, threefold:
> the substance (*qnomā*), also warmth, and third the light.
> One resides and stays in another without competition.
> (They are) mixed, but not confused; blended, but not bound;
> gathered, but not constrained; also loose, but not unstable.[224]

This section illustrates well how Ephrem does not formulate a metaphysical approach to the Trinity, but a symbolic one; it is not his concern to explain and investigate, but to illustrate the mystery and to make it plausible.

In the seventy-third *Hymn on Faith*, Ephrem gives particular attention to the incarnation and to the sending of the Holy Spirit, drawing again on the same image, likening the Son sometimes to the light, sometimes to a ray. The hymn's first strophe introduces the metaphor.

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[222] Some other Christian writers attempted to apply the image to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but only with limited success. Cf. Beck, *Trinitätslehre*, 1–24, 119–120.

[223] *HdF* 40, 1.

[224] *HdF* 40, 3.

> Behold, the allegories: sun and Father
> brightness and Son, warmth
> and Holy Spirit.[225]

Next, the poet refers to the mystery how three can be one.

> And although it is one, a Trinity
> is seen in it, which can not be comprehended.
> Who could explain (it)?
> One is many, one which is three,
> and three, one. A great confusion,
> revealed miracle![226]

Ephrem then turns to the details of this image. The sun is joined, yet separate from its ray, which is itself like a sun for us. And as one does not speak of two suns, so Christians do not confess two gods.[227] Moreover, warmth is united to the sun and to the ray.[228] "But when that ray has departed to its source—but it had not been separate from its begetter—it left here its warmth, like the Holy Spirit, which our Lord left with the disciples."[229] The metaphor of sun, light, and warmth well serves Ephrem's pastoral intention to strengthen the belief in the Trinity: "Look at the images in the creatures, and do not doubt about the three, lest you perish."[230]

In conclusion, Ephrem's doctrine of God—developed in the apologetic context of refuting the Neo-Arian assertions of the comprehensibility of the Godhead—takes as its starting point the divine names. Rather than trying conceptually to comprehend God by means of metaphysical categories, as did many Greek theologians, Ephrem understands the divine names as at the same time truly revealing aspects of the divine nature and as constituting the limit for human investigation into the divine. He gives particular attention to the "perfect names," which include the divine attributes *'ityā* (being), creator, gracious one, just one, and Father. The divine names make it possible for human beings to invoke the deity; Ephrem states that the names become the countenance of God for human beings.[231] In the writings of

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225 *HdF* 73, 1.
226 *HdF* 73, 2–3.
227 *HdF* 73, 4–6.
228 *HdF* 73, 11.
229 *HdF* 73, 18–19.
230 *HdF* 73, 20. The image also figures prominently in *HdF* 74–75.
231 *SdF* 2, 669–676.

Ephrem the Syrian, the theology of divine names, which would flourish again under different forms in later centuries,[232] received its first fully developed expression within Christian theology.[233]

[232] Neither Greek philosophical nor Jewish reflections on divine names can be discussed here. Later Christian authors who emphasized the divine names include Ps.-Dionysius (see above) and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I.13; on Thomas, see O.H. Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1988), 343–346.

[233] For conversations and helpful suggestions, I would like to thank J.F. Coakley (Harvard University), A.W. Keaty (St. John's Seminary), and J.C. Satterthwaite.

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ANAPHORAS

Robert J. Daly, S.J.*

1. *Introduction*

This will be a *lex orandi—lex credendi* reflection on the context and implications of the emergence of a mature theology of the Trinity that was taking place in the late fourth- to late fifth-century patristic golden age, and the concomitant appropriation of that theology in the shaping of the classical Eucharistic Prayers of that time. The reflection will take place within the parameters of the critical methodological questions as they have been outlined and refined by recent scholarship, especially, for example, by Paul Bradshaw.[1] In his final chapter, "The Coming of Christendom in the Fourth Century," Bradshaw has two subheadings: "Doctrine Shaping Liturgy" and "Liturgy Shaping Doctrine."[2] He points out the grounds for concluding that the shaping came from each direction, but leaves open the question whether the one or the other direction was dominant. I share with Bradshaw the assumption that this shaping must have come from now one, and now the other, of these directions. This article might be able to shed some small light on this issue, but this is not its primary purpose.

For it is from a contemporary liturgical-theological rather than historical-doctrinal position that the particular question of this article begins. Far more clearly than was possible for earlier ages, and especially for Western theologians who often suffered from a kind of "Christomonism," liturgical theologians are now able to articulate a theology of the Eucharist that is consistently trinitarian,[3] and along with that a

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[1] Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (2d Ed.; Oxford: University Press, 2002).

[2] Bradshaw, *The Search*, 226–229.

[3] See the remarks of Hans Bernhard Meyer, S.J. referring to Edward J. Kilmartin's *Christian Theology: Theology and Practice. Part I: Systematic Theology of Liturgy* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988), as recorded by Michael A. Fahey, S.J., "In Memoriam: Edward

trinitarian theology of Christian sacrifice. In addition, they can claim to find that theology at least implicitly—but indeed actually—present in the classical Eucharistic Prayers of the patristic golden age. One of the purposes of this article is to explore the validity of this claim.

First, the mature trinitarian theology of the Eucharist that contemporary theologians can claim to find in the classical anaphoras of the patristic golden age, especially those associated with the names of Basil and Chrysostom, and the many contemporary Eucharistic Prayers that descend from them, can be summed up as follows:

> The Eucharist … is the high point of both the expression of and the inchoative realization of the Church's marital covenant relationship with God. The center of this Eucharist is the Church's ritual action and prayer in which the assembly, led by its duly appointed minister, addresses God the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, praising and thanking God for the salvation-historical gifts of creation, covenant, and redemption, especially redemption in Jesus Christ, and asking God to send the Holy Spirit in order, by means of the transformation of the eucharistic gifts, to continue the transformation of the community and its individuals toward their eschatological destiny as the true Body of Christ. The ritual celebration culminates in the assembly coming forward to receive, as Augustine put it, "what you are," the Body of Christ. But this, of course, is still just the beginning. The full realization of the ritual celebration continues beyond what takes place in church. It continues as the assembly is sent forth to live out this eucharistic mystery in the world of everyday life. And it will finally be completed only at the *eschaton* when the universalistic hope expressed in the prophetic proclamation—"Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (see Rev 19:9)—has been fulfilled.[4]

Second, the specifically trinitarian understanding of sacrifice that contemporary theologians can claim to find at least implicitly present in these classical patristic anaphoras can be summarized as follows:

> Christian sacrifice has three interconnected "moments." It begins not with us, but with the self-offering of God the Father in the gift of the Son. The second moment is the totally free, totally loving response of the

J. Kilmartin, S.J., [1923–1994]," *OrChrP* 61 (1995): 5–35, at 17–18: "In our opinion no book of similar scope has yet appeared that on the basis of the theological tradition of East and West offers such a systematic, consistently structured Trinitarian theology of Christian worship and sacrament." That for which Meyer praises Kilmartin has become the widely accepted base position of main-line Christian sacramental and liturgical theology.

[4] Robert J. Daly, S.J., "Eucharistic Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age," *TS* 66 (2005): 1–2.

> Son in his humanity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Father and for us. The third moment—and only here does Christian sacrifice become real for us—takes place when human beings, in the Spirit, the same Spirit that was in Jesus, begin to enter into that self-offering, self-giving relationship of Father and Son.[5]

This, obviously, was not what was happening at the Last Supper. The Christian assembly, the primary ritual agent in the celebration of the Eucharist, had not yet been constituted; and even more obviously, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to that not-yet-existing assembly. This does not undercut Christian belief that Jesus instituted the Eucharist, but it does undercut an oversimplified identification of the Eucharist that Christians celebrate today with what Jesus did at the Last Supper. We have to think more in terms of the Last Supper being the originating moment in the institution of the Eucharist. We have to recognize that the Eucharist we celebrate today is something that took the Church, guided by the Spirit, several centuries to learn how to do. Thus, in terms of historical trajectories (rather than in terms of what is now the source and center of our Christian lives), the Church did not come from the Eucharist, but just the opposite: the Eucharist came from the Church. In other words, I am pleading for a more careful distinction between, on the one hand, an *existential* understanding of the Eucharist as the source, center, and summit of Christian life (à la no. 10 of Vatican II's *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* and the recent (2003) encyclical letter "Ecclesia de Eucharistia" of Pope John Paul II) and, on the other hand, an *historical* understanding of the Eucharist as something that took centuries to develop and is probably still developing.

When one raises the question of the historical origins of the Eucharist, one can, of course seek for its cultural and ritual antecedents deep in Israelite and even pre-Israelite history and culture, but in a short article, it is legitimate to begin with Jesus and the New Testament. Within the New Testament, one can find indications of at least six different practices of table fellowship, all but the first of which have generally come to be called "Eucharist." There was (1) the apparently

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[5] Paraphrased from Robert J. Daly, S.J., "Sacrifice: the Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery," *America* 188. 16 (May 12, 2003): 14–17, at 14–15. See also Robert J. Daly, S.J., "Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives," *TS* 64 (2003): 24–42, at 26–32.

revolutionary, or at least scandalous in its openness to all, way Jesus would eat with anyone. Then there was (2) the Last Supper, or the way Jesus celebrated this fellowship with his closest disciples shortly before his death. This is the obvious originating moment of the institution of the Eucharist; but neither exegesis nor historical analysis allows us to reconstruct precisely what happened. Then there was (3) the, apparently only annual and apparently only for Jews, celebration of a Christian Passover in the circle of James, the Lord's "brother" (Mark 6:3 par.) in Jerusalem. Then there was (4) the breaking of bread at home, while spending "much time together in the temple" and "having the good will of all the people" (Acts 2:46–47). Then there was (5) the martyrological, soteriological, sacrificial and sin-forgiving understanding in the New Testament accounts of the institution of the Eucharist in Mark 14:22–25; Matt 26:26–29; Luke 22:21–23; and 1 Cor 11:23–26. And finally there was (6) the Johannine Jesus' construal of the Eucharist as a mystery in which he sacramentally gives us as food his own personal body and blood (John 6:51–57). Sound exegesis and history do not allow all of these either to be harmonized or to be connected in a clear line of development.[6] However it also needs to be stressed that sound theology and traditional Christian faith, when properly understood, also does not require this to be done.[7]

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[6] This paragraph summarizes from Daly, "Eucharistic Origins," 7–11 which in turn acknowledges indebtedness to Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992); Bruce Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (New York: Brill, 1994). A very important consequence of this finding of great diversity within the New Testament is the demolition of the historical basis for the common theological assumption that there is a clear line of development between the Last Super of Jesus and the theologically mature Eucharists of the golden age of patristics. Neither biblical exegesis nor early liturgical history supports this assumption. Indeed, all the evidence points in the opposite direction. The closer one moves back towards the eucharistic practice of the earliest Christians—granted that the historical evidence is very scanty—the more one seems to move into plurality and diversity. Although this is fairly common knowledge among exegetes and historians of early Christian liturgy, it has, for the most part, not yet been appropriated by theologians, by official church teaching, or by popular piety (for example, to sing the historically oversimplifying hymn "At That First Eucharist…" on Holy Thursday seems to be almost obligatory in many Roman Catholic Communities).

[7] See Daly, "Eucharistic Origins."

2. *The Anaphora of Chrysostom*

It is not clear whether the anaphora associated with the name of St. John Chrysostom was actually composed by him, or simply taken over and adapted by him. What is fairly clear, however, is that, in substance, it dates back to the late fourth century, and in its basic shape and structure has come to be regarded as the norm.[8]

A 1 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And with your spirit.
Priest: Let us lift up our hearts.
People: We have them with the Lord.
Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord.
People: It is fitting and right ⟨to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity⟩.

2 *The priest begins the holy anaphora:* It is fitting and right to hymn you, ⟨to bless you, to praise you,⟩ to give you thanks, to worship you in all places of your dominion. For you are God, ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, existing always and in the same way, you and your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. You brought us out of non-existence into existence; and when we had fallen, you raised us up again, and did not cease to do everything until you had brought us up to heaven, and granted us the kingdom that is to come. For all these things we give thanks to you and to your only-begotten Son and to your Holy Spirit, for all that we know and do not know, your seen and unseen benefits that have come upon us.

We give you thanks also for this ministry; vouchsafe to receive it from our hands, even though thousands of archangels and ten thousands of angels stand before you, cherubim and seraphim, with six wings and many eyes, flying on high, (*aloud*) singing the triumphal hymn ⟨proclaiming, crying, and saying⟩:

3 *People:* Holy, ⟨holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest⟩.

B 4 *The priest privately:* With these powers, Master, lover of man, we also cry and say: holy are you and all-holy, and your only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit; holy are you and all-holy and magnificent is your glory; for

[8] Text taken as printed in R.C.D. Jasper and G.J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (3d ed.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), 131–134. Following the eighth-century Barberini manuscript, and with the people's part supplied from modern editions, this text "differs from the Barberini text only in a few additions and completions, here in angle brackets, and the omission of two phrases, here in square brackets" (Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 130).

you so loved the world that you gave your only-begotten Son that all who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life.

C 6 When he had come and fulfilled all the dispensation for us, on the night in which he handed himself over, he took bread in his holy and undefiled and blameless hands, gave thanks, blessed, broke, and gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying, (*aloud*) "Take, eat; this is my body, which is ⟨broken⟩ for you ⟨for forgiveness of sins." *People:* Amen⟩. ⟨*privately*⟩ Likewise the cup also after supper, saying, (*aloud*) "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."

D 7 *The priest, privately:* We therefore, remembering this saving commandment and all the things that were done for us: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the session at the right hand, the second and glorious coming again; (*aloud*) offering you your own from your own, in all and for all.
People: We hymn you, ⟨we bless you, we give you thanks, Lord, and pray to you, our God⟩.

8 *The priest says privately:* We offer you also this reasonable and bloodless service, and we pray and beseech and entreat you, send down your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts set forth; and make this bread the precious body of your Christ, [changing it by your Holy spirit,] Amen; and that which is in this cup the precious blood of your Christ, changing it by your Holy Spirit, Amen; so that they may become to those who partake for vigilance of soul, for fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for the fullness of the kingdom ⟨of heaven⟩, for boldness toward you, not for judgment or condemnation.

9 We offer you this reasonable service also for those who rest in faith, ⟨forefathers,⟩ Fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and all the righteous ⟨spirits⟩ perfected in faith; (*aloud*) especially our all-holy, immaculate, highly glorious, Blessed lady, Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary; ⟨*diptychs of the dead*;⟩ Saint John the ⟨prophet,⟩ forerunner, and Baptist, and the holy, ⟨glorious,⟩ and honored Apostles. . . .
The prayer continues with extensive intercessions (diptychs) for all the members of the Communion of Saints, for the living and the dead, for church and government leaders, for all in particular need of prayers and help, etc., until it ends:

E 10 . . . and send out your mercies upon us all, (*aloud*) and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify and hymn your all-honorable and magnificent name, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ⟨now and always and to the ages of ages⟩.
People: Amen.

It is easy to demonstrate the theological maturity of this prayer simply by listing what modern liturgical scholars commonly recognize as the "classical" structure of the Eucharistic Prayer. It has ten elements in five groups (already indicated in the left margin of the just-quoted anaphora of Chrysostom):

A 1 introductory dialogue
2 preface
3 *sanctus*
B 4 post-*sanctus*
5 preliminary epiclesis (alternative or additional post-*sanctus*)
C 6 narrative of institution
D 7 anamnesis
8 epiclesis
9 diptychs or intercessions, which may be divided
E 10 concluding doxology

With the appropriate absence of the fifth element, appropriate because there is a full epiclesis later on in the more proper place as element eight, the Chrysostom prayer has all of these elements, and indeed in the order that is considered to be ideal. In addition, the richness of a mature trinitarian theology, such as was outlined at the beginning of this article is fully manifest. The theological level—doctrinal level, lex credendi if you will—that this prayer reflects can be illustrated by going back to the beginning of the "development"[9] of the tradition of eucharistic praying.

3. *The* Didache

There are "eucharistic" prayers in chapters 9 and 10 of the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Recent scholarship indicates that these prayers seem to antedate the gospels. But even if they were from the end of the first century, or even later, they are clearly the first extant examples of Christian eucharistic praying. In the "analytic translation" provided by Milavec,[10] the full text of chapters 9 and 10 reads:

[9] Using scare quotes for the word "development" to remind us that there is insufficient evidence to postulate anything resembling a linear line of development.

[10] As translated and arranged by Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 2003), 30–35; same text and arrangement in his *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 22–25. The latter book is a brief (110 pp.) summary of the former (984 pp.). Milavec explains what he means by "analytic translation" on pages 9–10 and xvii respectively of his two books. Briefly: [a] words and phrases in square brackets ([ ]) are not represented in the Greek text but serve to clarify its obvious elliptical intent; [b] English words linked together by underlined spaces = a single Greek word rendered by a phrase in English; [c] an umlaut over a vowel or consonant (e.g. ÿou) signals that the Greek word or construction is plural; [d] the Greek postpositive *de*, when signaling simple continuation, is rendered

9.1 (And) concerning the eucharist (εὐχαριστίας), ëucharistize (εὐχαριστήσατε) thus:
9.2 First, concerning the cup:
We give you thanks, our Father
for the holy vine of your servant David
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you [is] the glory forever.
9.3 And concerning the broken [loaf]:
We give you thanks, our Father,
for the life and the knowledge
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you [is] the glory forever.
9.4 Just as this broken [loaf] was scattered
over the hills [as grain]
and, having_been_gathered_together, became one
in_like_fashion, may your church be_gathered_together
from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.
Because yours is the glory and the power
through Jesus Christ forever.
9.5 (And) lët no one eat or drink from ÿour eucharist (εὐχαριστίας)
except those baptized in the name of [the] Lord,
for the Lord has likewise said concerning this:
"Do not give what is holy to the dogs."
10.1 And after being filled [by the meal], eücharistize (εὐχαριστήσατε) thus:
10.2 We give you thanks, holy Father,
for your holy name,
which you tabernacle in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you [is] the glory forever.
10.3 You, almighty Master, created all things
for the sake of your name,
both food and drink you have given to people for enjoyment
in order that they might give thanks;
to us, on_the_other_hand, you have graciously_bestowed
Spirit-sent food and drink for life forever through your servant [Jesus].
10.4 Before all [these] things, we give you thanks
because you are powerful [on our behalf].
To you [is] the glory forever.
10.5 Remember, Lord, your church,
to save [her] from every evil
and to perfect [her] in your love
and to gather [her] together from the four winds

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as "(And)" in parentheses at the beginning of a sentence; but when the *de* has an adversative meaning, it is rendered in parentheses as "(but)" or "(on the other hand)."

[as] the sanctified into your kingdom
which you have prepared for her,
because yours is the power and the glory forever.
10.6 [A] Come, grace [of the kingdom]!
and pass_away, [O] this world!
[B] Hosanna to the God of David!
[C] If anyone is holy, come!
If anyone is not, convert.
[D] Come Lord [*marana tha*]! Amen!
(And) turn towards the prophets [allowing them]
to eucharistize (εὐχαριστεῖν) as much as they wish.

Right from the first discovery and publication of the unique manuscript of the *Didache* (discovered 1873, first published 1883), there has been debate about whether this obviously eucharistic prayer—quite primitive and unique in contrast to what later developed—was the prayer of a eucharistic celebration in the full sense of the word. There is no institution narrative or transformation of the gifts of bread and wine, nor any mention of the martyrological, sin-forgiving, and soteriological themes commonly found in the developed Eucharistic Prayers. On the other hand, the members of the *Didache* community obviously thought it was a "Eucharist;" at least they called it Eucharist, repeatedly using both the noun and the verb form of the word to refer to it. The weight of most recent scholarship—no longer fixated on the account of institution as an absolutely essential element of every Eucharistic Prayer, and no longer so strongly insisting on applying later definitions to earlier forms of eucharistic celebration—agrees with them.[11] However, deciding this issue is not of primary importance for this article. What is

[11] It is significant that it cannot be proven that the account of institution is clearly and proveably found in any EP that predates the A.D. 325 Council of Nicea. It used to be common wisdom to assume that this was simply a curious accident partially explainable by the paucity of texts in question (although there are as many as ten of them). It was also customary to assume that the account of institution was (of course) a part of every eucharistic celebration (otherwise, it was assumed, it wouldn't be a Eucharist). That assumption was used to explain why it was not necessary for the text actually to contain the *verba Jesu* explicitly. The current scholarly willingness to concede that the EP of the *Didache* probably represents a real Eucharist, as well as the recent official Roman Catholic acceptance of the validity of the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, currently in use in the Chaldean Church and the Assysrian Church of the East, seems to have undercut these assumptions. See Robert F. Taft, "Mass Without the Consecration?" *America* 188. 16 (May 12, 2003): 7–11. For greater detail see Taft's "Mass without Consecration? The Historic Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001," *Worship* 77 (2003): 482–509.

of primary importance is that this prayer, whether or not it is a full Eucharist, is the earliest example of Christian eucharistic praying, and is thus, at least in terms of content and structure, the earliest extant Eucharistic Prayer.

Like most EPs, it is addressed in the first person plural to God the Father.[12] It gives thanks over the bread and over the cup for the gifts of creation and the gift of the special revelation that has come through Jesus. It contains solemn intercessions for the Church. It is very doxological; six times within the prayer (9.2, 3, 4; 10.2, 4, 5) it ends a "eucharistizing" sentence with a doxology. It is, as are most Christian eucharistic liturgies, eschatological in its looking forward to the second coming of the Lord. It also has a special mode of divine presence; however, this is not the eucharistic presence of Jesus but the eucharistic presence of the name of the Father tabernacled in our hearts (10.2). Finally there is a possible—but certainly oblique, and probably anachronistically improper, reference to the Holy Spirit (if we are thinking of Holy Spirit in the theologically developed way in which we find it in Chrysostom's anaphora) in the mention of the special *pneumatikēn trophēn* (Spirit-sent food) of 10:3.

Although clearly a Eucharistic Prayer, it is indeed very primitive. It lacks most of the identifiable elements of the classical EPs, and has only the merest suggestion of their basic structure. And more to the point of this paper, which is asking whether there is any correlation between the development of the EP and that of the Trinity, it remains far indeed from the developed trinitarian theology of the anaphoras of the patristic golden age. It seems to represent a pre-trinitarian and even "pre-christological" stage of Christian theology. For, in terms of Christology, Jesus is never referred to as "Son," nor even as "Messiah," but as "your servant Jesus" (9.2, 3; 10.3).[13] Jesus is referred to as "the Lord" in 9.5, but, in this context, one cannot educe from this any clear connotation of divinity. Jesus is also (possibly) addressed as Lord again

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[12] The most notable exception to this in a "classical" EP seems to be in the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* which (still in the first person plural) in its first paragraph following the *sanctus*, addresses the kenotic Lord (Jesus); after which it "reverts" to addressing God the Father (see Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 42–44). But note that some current Eastern EPs, e.g., in the Marionite Church, have EPs with prayers addressed to Jesus.

[13] Only in the baptismal formulas of 7.1 and 7.3 is the trinitarian "Son" mentioned anywhere in the *Didache*. Most scholars assume that here, as apparently also in Matt 28:19, the trinitarian baptismal formula is probably a later insertion into the manuscripts.

in 10.5; but there is ambiguity here. For the parallel prayer for the Church over the bread in 9.4 is clearly addressed to the Father, not to Christ. Nor is it, in this context, all that clear that the *marana tha* call in 10.6 is addressed to the "Lord Jesus" rather than to the "Lord God."

The trinitarian Holy Spirit is totally absent. As already indicated, the words in 10.3, *pneumatikēn trophēn kai poton*, "spiritual food and drink" to distinguish the special eucharistic food from the gift of ordinary food is not trinitarian,[14] although Milavec's translation "Spirit-sent" might suggest—but if so, improperly—an epicletic action of the Spirit. Serendipitously, however, the location of this seemingly improper anachronistic suggestion occurs more or less at the point where, if this were a theologically developed Eucharistic Prayer, an epiclesis of the Holy Spirit would be found.

4. *Justin Martyr*

Justin, a whole century later (c. 165) tantalizes us because, while describing at some length how Christians celebrate the Eucharist, he does not provide the text of any Eucharistic Prayer. Indeed, his witness suggests that there were in his day, in his community, no set texts at all for eucharistic praying. In the *First Apology*, he points out that the one who presides "gives thanks at some length" (13.2); and "the president likewise sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability" (67.1).[15] However, he does provide precious early witness to the trinitarian *form* of eucharistic praying:

> Then bread and a cup of water and (a cup) of mixed wine are brought to him who presides over the brethren, and he takes them and sends up praise and glory to the Father of all in the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and gives thanks at some length that we have been deemed worthy of these things from him.[16]

[14] The phrase reminds one of Paul's *pneumatikon brōma ephagon … pneumatikon epion poma* in 1 Cor 10:3 and 4. In neither case can this be seen as suggesting the trinitarian Holy Spirit except by anachronistic projection.

[15] Texts from Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 28 and 30.

[16] Justin, *1 Apol.* 67.1. Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 28.

5. *"From" Justin Martyr "to" the* Anaphora of Addai and Mari *and* Sharar

(Another century or more has passed.) The scare quotes around "from" and "to" are to keep reminding ourselves of what we pointed out at the beginning of this article: that there exists no solid evidence to support the assumption that there is some kind of linear development in eucharistic praying from Jesus to the developed trinitarian eucharistic theology of the classical anaphoras of the patristic golden age. This does not claim that there was no such development; we simply do not know and cannot prove that there was. We must also keep reminding ourselves that the dating of this material is anything but an exact science.

Addai and Mari and *Sharar* are examined at this point because, in terms of trinitarian theology, they represent a significantly more advanced stage of "development," whether linear or not, that lies close to the *chronological* midpoint between the *Didache* and the anaphora associated with the name of Chrysostom.[17] One will notice, however, that in terms of structural and theological "development" we are now far past the midpoint between the primitive *Didache* and the anaphora of Chrysostom. *Addai and Mari* reads:[18]

A 1 *Priest:* Peace be with you.
Answer: And with you and your spirit.
Priest: The grace of our Lord ⟨Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and ever world without end⟩.
Answer: Amen.
Priest: Up with your minds.
Answer: They are with you, O God.
Priest: The offering is offered to God, the Lord of all.
Answer: It is fitting and right.

[17] The "chronological midpoint" part of this analysis depends significantly on the accuracy of two assumptions: [1] that the existing texts of *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar* contain core elements that go back to the third century; and [2] that the text of the Chrysostom anaphora reflects the theological influence of post-Chrysostom, fifth-century trinitarian theology. These assumptions seem to be supported by the fact that what can be educed from these prayers, so read, seems to concur with what we know about the trinitarian theology of those periods.

[18] Text as presented in Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 39–44. Angled brackets ⟨ ⟩ indicate material that is missing in the tenth/eleventh-century manuscript on which this translation is based.

2 *The priest says privately:* Worthy of glory from every mouth and thanksgiving from every tongue is the adorable and glorious name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He created the world through his grace and its inhabitants in his compassion; he saved men through his mercy, and gave great grace to mortals.

Your majesty, O Lord, a thousand thousand heavenly beings adore; myriad myriads of angels, and ranks of spiritual beings, ministers of fire and spirit, together with the holy cherubim and seraphim, glorify your name, crying out and glorifying ⟨unceasingly calling to one another and saying⟩:

3 *People:* Holy, holy, ⟨holy, Lord God almighty; heaven and earth are full of his praises⟩.

B 4 *The priest says privately:* And with these heavenly armies we, also even we, your lowly, weak, and miserable servants, Lord, give you thanks because you have brought about us a great grace which cannot be repaid. For you put on our human nature to give us life through your divine nature; you raised us from our lowly state; you restored our Fall; you restored our immortality; you forgave our debts; you justified our sinfulness; you enlightened our intelligence. You, our Lord and God, conquered our enemies, and made the lowliness of our weak nature to triumph through the abundant mercy of your grace.

(*aloud*) And for all ⟨your helps and graces towards us, let us raise to you praise and honor and thanksgiving and worship, now and ever and world without end⟩.

People: Amen.

D 7 *The priest says privately*: You, Lord, through your many mercies which cannot be told, be graciously mindful of all the pious and righteous Fathers who were pleasing in your sight, in the commemoration of the body and blood of your Christ, which we offer to you on the pure and holy altar, as you taught us.

D 9(?) And grant us your tranquility and your peace for all the days of this age (*repeat*)

People: Amen. That all the inhabitants of the earth may know you, that you alone are the true God and Father, and you sent our Lord Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, and he, our Lord and God, taught us through his life-giving gospel all the purity and holiness of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, bishops, priests, deacons, and all sons of the holy Catholic Church who have been sealed with the living seal of holy baptism.

And we also, Lord, (*thrice*) your lowly, weak, and miserable servants, who have gathered and stand before you, [and] have received through tradition the form [*or* example *or* pattern] which is from you, rejoicing, glorifying, exalting, commemorating, and celebrating this great mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D 8 May your Holy Spirit, Lord, come and rest on this offering of your servants, and bless and sanctify it, that it may be to us, Lord, for remission of debts, forgiveness of sins, and the great hope of resurrection from the

dead, and new life in the kingdom of heaven, with all who have been pleasing in your sight.

E 10 And because of all your wonderful dispensation towards us, with open mouths and uncovered faces we give you thanks and glorify you without ceasing in your Church, which has been redeemed by the precious blood of your Christ, offering up ⟨praise, honor, thanksgiving and adoration to your living and life-giving name, now and at all times forever and ever⟩.
People: Amen.
APOLOGIA
FRACTION AND SIGNING
LORD'S PRAYER
ELEVATION
The priest proceeds: The holy thing to the holies is fitting in perfection.
People: One holy Father, one holy Son, one holy Spirit. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. Amen.

The absence of the account of institution may indeed be one of the signs of the great antiquity of this prayer (that is, in its core elements perhaps even before the end of the third century), but that particular relatively unique feature in a fully formed EP is not directly relevant to the central purpose of our inquiry. The prayer does indeed contain all the other essential groups and elements of a full EP, although the smooth flow that one finds in the mature EPs from one element to the next may be lacking, and the distinctions between elements 7 to 9 in group D may be blurry. The prayer is also obviously trinitarian. Although it is true that trinitarian formulas were often added to early texts by later copyists or editors, there is nothing in the trinitarian formulas here or in *Sharar* that would seem anachronistically out of place in the late third century. However, the real question remains: what is the understanding of the Trinity that is in play here?

Before we get into that, however, we should note one of the relatively unique features of *Addai and Mari*, a feature that it shares in a small way with *Sharar*.[19] B 4 in *Addai and Mari* switches from addressing the Father to addressing Jesus, but immediately thereafter reverts to the "classical" mode of addressing the Father. *Sharar*, on the other hand, once having made this switch at precisely the same point as

[19] *Sharar*, alternately known as *The Third Anaphora of St. Peter*, obviously has the same family origin as *Addai and Mari* (see Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 45–51). Although the extant text seems to be less ancient than that of *Addai and Mari*, it also, in many of its core elements seems to be earlier than *Addai and Mari*. See Stephen B. Wilson, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari," in Paul Bradshaw, ed., *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 19–37.

Addai and Mari, continues to address Jesus throughout the rest of the prayer. Addressing Jesus in the EP may be a residue from what may have been, in some communities, a more primitive mode of eucharistic praying. For example, the apocryphal, mid- to late-second century *Acts of John* (nos. 85–86 and 109–110) contains two prayers spoken by the Apostle John at Eucharists that—like the Eucharist (?) in Acts 2:46—were celebrated with bread alone.[20] The prayers consist solely of praise of God that is addressed to Christ (presumably Christ as God, but with no christological precision as to who and what Christ is) after which, the apostle distributes the bread that is referred to as "the eucharist of the Lord" (86) and "the most holy eucharist" (110). As for the christological and trinitarian theology that might be at play in these early apocryphal texts, one can assume (but cannot prove) that it is as primitive as the eucharistic praying seems to be.

5.1. *Excursus: Origen*

Origen's *Dialogue with Heraclides* may supply a bit of context, if not actually shed some light on what is going on here. This work can be reliably dated from the last decade of Origen's life, the late 240s, and from a time when, a century before Nicea, the Church was struggling "to secure the faith against what it [eventually] came to recognize and reject as subordinationism, Arianism, Sabellianism, Apollinarism and the other Christological and Trinitarian heresies."[21] The work seems to be the transcript of the proceedings of a local synod in which Origen is apparently trying to lead Heraclides away from his Monarchian reluctance to address Jesus as God in prayer. The relevant words of Origen are:

> Oblation (*prosphora*) is constantly made to God the all-powerful through Jesus Christ by reason of his communication in divinity with the Father.

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[20] Thanks to John Baldovin's mention of this in the article "Eucharistic Prayer," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (ed. Paul Bradshaw; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 192–199, at 194. For the translation of *The Acts of John*, see M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), 228–270. As mentioned above in Note 12, some anaphoras in the Eastern churches still have prayers addressed to Jesus.

[21] See "Introduction" in *Origen. Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and his Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul* (trans. and annotated Robert J. Daly, S.J.; ACW 54; New York, N.Y./Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992), 21.

> Nor is it made twice but (once) to God through God. I will seem to speak daringly: in prayer it is necessary to respect the conventions.[22]

Heraclides was apparently being challenged for his refusal to pray to Jesus as God. Also, quite obviously, as "oblation" and "respect the conventions" indicate, the discussion is not about private prayer but about the public prayer of the Church, presumably the Eucharist. Apparently, the dialogue is taking place primarily because Heraclides was unwilling to pray to Jesus in his eucharistic praying as we saw the apostle doing in the Acts of John, and as *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar* did. And, quite possibly, Origen is offering him a solution that is somewhat more palatable to his monarchian leanings: pray to God through Jesus, while at the same time not contesting that Jesus is true God. This may well be the earliest securely datable witness to the eventual standard form of eucharistic praying: to the Father through the Son. We can conjecture that Origen's "solution" contributed significantly to its eventual dominance.

5.2. *Addai and Mari and Chrysostom*

But with *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar*, we have more than conjecture to go on. With the exception of element C 6, the account of institution, all the elements found in the mature Chrysostom model are present, with only some slight blurring of the distinction (and order) between elements D 7 to 9. But what can we learn from the content of these elements and the theological understanding that lies behind them?

Both Chrysostom and *Addai and Mari* are explicitly trinitarian, explicitly mentioning by name all three persons of the Trinity both in the dialogue (A 1) and preface (A 2). But, there is a significant difference. Chrysostom uses language—"consubstantial and undivided Trinity"—that one would not expect to find before Nicea and Constantinople I. In the preface, Chrysostom further emphasizes the divinity of the second and third persons of the Trinity by explicitly applying to them, while also addressing them in the second person, the modifiers "ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, existing always and in the same way." *Addai and Mari* contents itself in this place (A 2) with speaking far less directly, in the third person, of the adorable and glorious *name* of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This prayer is not subordina-

[22] Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides* 4:31–35 (ACW 54.60–61).

tionist or Arian in what it proclaims. However, one can easily imagine subordinationists, Arians, and perhaps even Monarchians being comfortable with it. It is difficult to imagine that they would be similarly comfortable with Chrysostom's prayer.

Now for the great difference in the post-*sanctus* (B 4): Chrysostom continues to address both God the Father, and with him the Son and the Holy Spirit: "Holy are you and all-holy, and your only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit …" But this is where *Addai and Mari* (*Sharar* too in almost the identical words) switches to what may be a more primitive mode of eucharistic praying: addressing Jesus directly. One notices immediately that this prayer in B 4 is definitely not trinitarian; neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit are mentioned, as they are in Chrysostom. Furthermore, the language and terminology with which Jesus is addressed is primitive in the sense of being biblical and "pre-theological" (if by "theology" we mean Christology and trinitarian theology). One difference between *Sharar* and *Addai and Mari* is that *Addai and Mari* toward the end of this unit, adds (assuming that *Sharar* is earlier) the phrase: "You, our Lord and God." Is this an indication that *Addai and Mari* senses the need to emphasize more the divinity of Jesus, in contrast to more primitive forms of praying where this was not as emphasized? Or is it simply a felicitous allusion, without theological implications to Thomas's profession of faith in John 20:28?

There are also significant differences in the epiclesis (D 8). In Chrysostom the epiclesis is explicitly transformative of the elements of bread and wine. In *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar* (which is still addressing the Son rather than the Father), the epiclesis is much "softer," One prays not for the transformation of the elements, but only that the Holy Spirit "come and rest on this offering of your servants, and bless and sanctify it …" Curiously, however (or, perhaps, significantly?), *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar* then go on to put much more emphasis than does Chrysostom on the transformation that is to take place in the members of the assembly.

In another curious difference, *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar* do not end with a trinitarian doxology (E 10). But a very strong doxology, indeed a double doxology, is added just before the distribution of Communion. Was this a later addition to make up for what, by the time of the emergence of the classical EPs, must have been perceived as a lack in the earlier form of the prayer?

6. *The Liturgy of St. Mark*

The early forms of the Liturgy of St. Mark,[23] which probably date from somewhere between 300 and 400, fill out the picture a bit more—but again, it is not that of a linear progression. In what seems to be the preface of the fragmentary Strasbourg Papyrus, we read:

> You made everything through your wisdom, the light [of?] your true Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; giving thanks through him to you with him and the Holy Spirit, we offer the reasonable sacrifice of this bloodless service, which all the nations offer you . . .[24]

I concur with Jasper and Cuming that the sacrifice referred to is that of praise and prayer, as this was the primary meaning and understanding of sacrifice, whether eucharistic or not, in the first few Christian centuries. The trinitarian formulary (through the Son and with him and the Holy Spirit) is what one finds generally by the end of the third century. Like *Addai and Mari*, there seems to be here none of the specifically theological qualifications one finds in Chrysostom; and like *Addai and Mari*, the closing doxology of the anaphora does not include the Holy Spirit.

However, in the more extended form in which this prayer is found in the British Museum Tablet, one finds the anamnesis (D 7) beginning to be formulated in the familiar ways found in most of the classical EPs. For example:

> Proclaiming thus, Lord, the death of our only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and confessing his Resurrection and his Ascension into heaven, and looking for his glorious coming, we set before you these gifts from your own, this bread and this cup.

This flows immediately into an explicitly transformative epiclesis:

> We pray and beseech you to send your Holy Spirit and your power on these [your?] [gifts] set before you, on this bread and this cup, and to make the bread the body of Christ and [the cup the blood of the] new [covenant] of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.[25]

In terms of "development," this represents a more advanced stage than that found in *Addai and Mari* and *Sharar*, and is more like that found in Chrysostom.

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[23] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 52–56.
[24] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 53.
[25] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 54–56.

7. *The Egyptian Anaphora of St. Basil*[26]

What we find here is not unlike what we find in the other anaphoras from this pre-Chrysostom phase. It is addressed to the Father. The preface mentions creation through the Son, but does not mention the Holy Spirit. The post-*sanctus* is trinitarian, but the Christ-event and the role of the Holy Spirit in this prayer is mentioned solely in traditional New-Testament terms with no suggestion of the theological qualifiers so obvious in Chrysostom. The epiclesis is found in what, by this time seems to be the usual place, immediately after and flowing from the Anamnesis Offering Prayer that comes right after the account of institution:

> And we, sinners and unworthy and wretched, pray you, our God, in adoration that in the good pleasure of your goodness your Holy Spirit may descend upon us and upon these gifts that have been set before you, and may sanctify them and make them holy of holies.

It is, as are most instances of the epiclesis in this relatively early period, a "soft" epiclesis that does not pray explicitly for the transformation of the elements. At the end of the prayer, after the reading of the diptychs by the deacon, the bishop concludes the intercessions with two trinitarian formulas, the second of which is also specifically ecclesiological:

> Give them rest in your presence; preserve in your faith us who live here, guide us to your kingdom, and grant us your peace at all times; through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Father in the Son, the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit, in your holy, one, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Before Communion we find the trinitarian acclamation that is still used in this place in some contemporary Eastern rites:

> One Father is holy, one Son is holy, one Spirit is holy. Amen.[27]

[26] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 67–73.
[27] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 73.

8. *Egyptian Local Rites*[28]

8.1. *The Prayers of Serapion*

A late fourth-century dating is probable, but was questioned by Botte because of the apparent presence of Arian language that would not fit well in the mouth of Serapion, known to be a friend and protégé of Athanasius.[29] Because of the delicacy of nuance at play here, I quote the whole first part of the preface:

> A 2 It is fitting and right to praise, to hymn, to glorify you, the uncreated Father of the only-begotten Jesus Christ.
> We praise you, uncreated God, unsearchable, ineffable, incomprehensible by all created being.
> We praise you who know the Son and reveal to the saints the glories about him, who are known by your begotten Word, and seen and interpreted to the saints.
> We praise you, unseen Father, provider of immortality: you are the fountain of life, the fountain of light, the fountain of all grace and all truth, lover of man and lover of the poor; you reconcile yourself to all and draw all to yourself through the coming of your beloved Son.
> We pray, make us living men.
> Give us a spirit of light, that we may know you, the true (God) and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.
> Give us Holy Spirit, that we may be able to speak and expound your unspoken mysteries.
> May the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit speak in us and hymn you through us.[30]

Since this text apparently comes from the time of the post-Nicean Arian crisis, we read it with a special alertness to that issue. Such a reading suggests that this preface would not offend Arian ears, though it might not satisfy their doctrinal desires. It would probably affect the Niceans in the same way. This clearly suggests that, more or less in line with the general conservatism—sometimes archaism—of liturgical texts, eucharistic anaphoras were not looked upon as the primary place where doctrinal issues were to be argued or "settled."

Later, after the account of institution, there is a consecratory epiclesis, not of the Spirit, however, but of the Word. Jasper and Cuming

[28] Following the arrangement of Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 74–81.
[29] See Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 74.
[30] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 76.

comment on this as follows: "Botte laid great stress on this as a deliberate depreciation of the Spirit, but Athanasius in his letter to Serapion often uses language which shows that he still thought of *Logos* and *Pneuma* as inseparable; where one is, there the other is also. Granted the tendency of all liturgies to preserve archaic modes of speech, the use of *Logos* in this context presents no problem, but may be regarded as a genuine archaism,"[31] and one that does not seem to reflect either an Arian or Nicean agenda. Still from *The Prayers of Sarapion* we read:

> D 8 Let your holy Word come on this bread, O God of truth, that the bread may become body of the Word; and on this cup, that the cup may become blood of the Truth; and make all who partake to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every disease, and for the empowering of all advancement and virtue; not for condemnation, O God of truth, nor for censure and reproach.
>
> For we have called upon you, the uncreated, through the only begotten in Holy Spirit. Let this people receive mercy; let it be counted worthy of advancement; let angels be sent out to be present among the people for bringing to naught the evil one, and for establishing of the Church.[32]

After the intercessions at the end of the anaphora, and then later, after the prayer over the offering of oils and waters, there are fairly standard trinitarian doxologies.

The Deir Balyzeh Papyrus

Most significant here is that, as also apparently in the Catecheses of Cyril of Jerusalem, the epiclesis, definitely consecratory, comes immediately after the *sanctus*, before it then uses the *Didache* (here serving an intercessory function) to segue into the account of institution:

> Fill us also with the glory from (you), and vouchsafe to send down your Holy Spirit upon these creatures (and) make the bread the body of our (Lord and) Savior Jesus Christ, and the cup the blood … of our Lord and …[33]

Again, the concluding doxology is "standard."

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[31] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 75.
[32] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 77–78.
[33] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 80.

The Louvain Coptic Papyrus

This fragment shows a further step in the development of the post-*sanctus*. There is an anamnesis, an offering, and a consecratory epiclesis of the Holy Spirit, all coming *before* the account of institution:

> Heaven and earth are full of that glory wherewith you glorified us through your only-begotten son Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation, sitting at the right hand of your majesty in heaven, who will come to judge the living and the dead. We make the remembrance of his death, offering to you your creatures, this bread and this cup. We pray and beseech you to send out over them your Holy spirit, the Paraclete, from heaven … to make(?) the bread the body of Christ and the cup the blood of Christ of the new covenant.[34]

9. *The "Mystery" of Hippolytus: the* Apostolic Tradition

I use the word "mystery" in this subtitle in order to call attention to the ambiguities in the dating and the provenance of this work (as well as of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, to be taken up in the following sections). The *Apostolic Tradition* that contains the anaphora of Hippolytus is now recognized as representing, not something that can be associated with the early third-century Hippolytus in Rome, but is, rather, a collage of materials from various sources coming from perhaps as early as the middle of the third to as late as the middle of the fourth century.[35] The anaphora itself, from chapter 4, seems, in its present form, to be (safely) datable from the latter part of this period.

> The paucity of ante-Nicene parallels for material in the *Apostolic Tradition* is perhaps at its greatest with regard to the eucharistic prayer itself. With the exception of the prayer texts in *Didache* 9 and 10, and some brief invocations over food in early apocryphal literature—all of which are completely different in character from the prayer here—no extant eucharistic prayers can be dated with any certainty before the fourth century. Even texts that are often thought to have roots in this earlier period (the Strasbourg Papyrus and the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*) manifest

[34] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 82.

[35] See Bradshaw, *The Search*, 80–83, and Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 14.

a number of significant differences from this text. For example, the *Strasbourg Papyrus* focuses its praise of God entirely on the theme of creation—which is passed over quickly in one clause here ("through whom you made all things")—and contains substantial intercession, which is completely lacking in this prayer. The *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* consists of a series of discrete prayer units rather than a continuously flowing text. Both the papyrus and the anaphora lack a narrative of institution. Thus, if this prayer does belong to the third century in its present form, it is very advanced for its age, having some features that are otherwise first encountered only in the fourth century or later.[36]

With this caution, then, we present the anaphora from the *Apostolic Tradition*:

A 1 (*the dialogue*)
2 We render thanks to you, O God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us as a savior and redeemer and angel of your will; who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all things, and in whom you were well pleased. You sent him from heaven into a virgin's womb; and conceived in the womb, he was made flesh and was manifested as your son, being born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands when he had to suffer, that he might release from suffering those who have believed in you.
B 4 And when he was betrayed to voluntary suffering that he might destroy death, and break the bonds of the devil, and tread down hell, and shine upon the righteous, and fix a term, and manifest the resurrection,
C 6 he took bread and gave thanks to you, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body, which shall be broken for you." Likewise also the cup, saying, "This is my blood, which is shed for you; when you do this, you make my remembrance."
D 7 Remembering therefore his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving you thanks because you have held us worthy to stand before you and minister to you.
D 8 And we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church, that, gathering her into one, you would grant to all who receive the holy things (to receive) for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth;
E 10 that we may praise and glorify you through your child Jesus Christ; through whom be glory and honor to you, to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and to the ages of ages.[37]

[36] Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition*, 44.
[37] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 35.

One notices, first of all, that in the preface (A 2) Jesus is referred to as child of God and angel of God's will. This is primitive language and recalls what we have called the pre-christological terminology and understanding of the *Didache*. On the other hand, almost immediately, Jesus is spoken of as being born of the Holy Spirit (in contrast to just being conceived of the Holy Spirit). This is a much later manner of speaking. Much later, too is the seamless, smooth flowing between the elements of the anaphora. Later, too (but still early to mid-fourth century) is the soft, non-consecratory epiclesis. The final doxology (E 10) is trinitarian in what has been established as the traditional manner: to the Father, through the Son (here, archaically, as "your child Jesus Christ), with the Holy Spirit." All in all, we have an anaphora with some archaically primitive elements, but that was probably redacted into its present form somewhere in the mid fourth century. Chronologically, this was at the height of the Arian crisis, but there seems to be no obvious internal evidence that it was affected by that crisis. Archaic language and concepts may well have seemed at that time more congenial to Arian than to Nicean sensitivities. But to claim that this was the reason, rather than traditional liturgical conservatism, for the presence of these archaisms goes beyond what the evidence can support. Quite different, however, is the situation in the anaphora of Chrysostom, quoted near the beginning of this article, and the Eucharistic Prayers in chapters VII and VIII of *The Apostolic Constitutions* to which we now turn. One can find elements in these prayers, especially in *AC* VIII, that seem to be aggressively (even polemically) theological.

10. *The Apostolic Constitutions VII*

The *Apostolic Constitutions* as a whole has been clearly identified as coming from the pen of a late fourth-century (about 370) Arian redactor.[38] As we shall see, there is obvious internal evidence to support this. But first, from Book 7, we have an obvious adaptation, but still very primitive, of the Eucharistic Prayers of *Didache* 9 and 10:[39]

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[38] For much of the material in this and the following section I am dependent on Thomas A. Kopecek, "Neo-Arian Religion: The Evidence of the Apostolic Constitutions," in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessment: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 5–10, 1983, Oxford, England* (Patristic Monograph Series 11; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 153–179.

[39] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 101 summarize this trenchantly: "Whatever the orig-

Always be thankful, as faithful and well-disposed servants, about the thanksgiving saying thus:

We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life which you made known to us through your child Jesus, through whom also you made everything and take thought for everything. You sent him to become man for our salvation, you granted him to suffer and to die; you also raised him from the dead, you were pleased to glorify him and set him at your right hand, through him you promised us the resurrection of the dead.

Almighty Master, eternal God, as this bread was scattered and when brought together became one, so bring your Church from the ends of the world into your kingdom.

Again we give thanks to you, our Father, for the precious blood of Jesus Christ which was poured out for us, and the precious body of which also we perform these symbols; for he commanded us to proclaim his death … through him be glory to you for evermore. Amen.

And after partaking, give thanks thus:

We give thanks to you, God and Father of our Savior Jesus, for your holy name which you have enshrined in us, and for the knowledge and faith and love and immortality which you gave us through your child Jesus. You, almighty master, the God of all, created the world and the things in it through him, and planted the law in our souls, and made ready beforehand the things for men's partaking; God of our holy and blameless Fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, your faithful servants, mighty God, faithful and true and not deceitful in your promises, you sent Jesus the Christ to dwell among us as man, being God the Word and man, to destroy error utterly. Remember now through him your holy Church which you have redeemed with the precious blood of your Christ, and deliver it from all evil, and perfect it in your love and your truth, and bring us all into your kingdom, which you prepared for it.

Marana tha.

Hosanna to the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

God is the Lord, who has appeared to us in the flesh …[40]

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inal purpose of these prayers, the editor clearly intends his revision for the eucharist, and it is interesting to see how little he thinks it is necessary to add. He runs the two thanksgivings of *Didache* 9 together, with the bread before the cup, and inserts references to Christ's incarnation, passion, and resurrection. The Last Supper is represented simply by the words 'he commanded us to proclaim his death.' The editor sees no need to add Sanctus, institution narrative, anamnesis, offering, epiclesis, or intercessions. It is still a very primitive prayer."

[40] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 101–102.

This is indeed very primitive. But, when examined as a Eucharistic Prayer or, more precisely perhaps, as a "pre-anaphora," we find that it is not totally without structure. However that structure is not yet that of a developing classical anaphora but rather, that much more fundamental protasis–apodasis/anamnesis–epiclesis structure that seems to lie at the heart of most Jewish and Christian praying: namely, praise and thanksgiving (protasis/anamnesis) followed by petition for what is needed (apodasis/epiclesis). In the first paragraph the anamnesis gives praise and thanks over the bread for creation and the special new-covenant gifts of incarnation, passion, and resurrection. The second paragraph prays epicletically for the unity of the Church. The third paragraph then gives anamnetic thanks for the precious blood and body of Jesus now being ritually celebrated, before concluding with a non-trinitarian doxology to the Father through Jesus. The second (*after partaking*) section repeats basically the same anamnetic/epicletic structure, but without the doxology.

This prayer is, therefore, pre-trinitarian. And while it is not so primitive as to be described, like the *Didache*, as "pre-christological," its implied Christology is quite primitive, quite inchoative. Thus, if one considers Arian Christology to be more primitive that Nicean Christology, one could conjecturally offer this as an explanation why an Arian redactor, as late as 370, when fairly mature models of the anaphora were apparently easily available, could present this as a Eucharistic Prayer. Such a conjecture is supported by the close affinity of neo-Arian religion to a theologically conservative Jewish Christianity. When, however, we come to the next chapter of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, we have far more than conjecture to work with.

11. *The Apostolic Constitutions VIII*

Before quoting selectively from the text—it is too lengthy to quote in entirety—let me list some of the characteristics of neo-Arian religion that are fairly obviously present in this anaphora: (1) as already mentioned for *AC* VII, a close affinity to a theologically conservative Jewish Christianity; (2) an unusually jealous and intense worship of the one true God, or, as Kopecek put it, an "intensely consistent monotheism;" (3) the liturgical role of the Son as the primary worshipper of the Father; (4) placing restrictions on the worship of the Son; (5) a tendency to downplay affective worship in favor of consciously intellectual wor-

ship.[41] The second, third, and fifth of these characteristics are obviously present just in the first two paragraphs of the lengthy (22-paragraph) preface:

> A 2 It is truly fitting and right to praise you before all things, essentially existing God, existing before created things, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named, alone unbegotten, without beginning, without lord or master, lacking nothing, provider of all good things, greater than every cause and origin, always being in one and the same mode, from whom all things came into being as from a starting point.
> For you are knowledge, without beginning, eternal vision, unbegotten hearing, untaught wisdom, first in nature, alone in existence, too great to be numbered. You brought all things from non-existence into existence through your only-begotten Son; and him you begat without an intermediary before all ages by your will and power and goodness, your only-begotten Son, the Word, God, living wisdom, the firstborn of all creation, the angel of your great purpose, your high-priest ⟨and notable worshipper⟩, king and lord of all rational and sentient nature, who was before all, through whom are all. (*Prayers*, 104–105)

The theme of the Son as worshipper of the Father is resumed in the last paragraph of the preface:

> For all things be glory to you, almighty Lord. You are worshipped ⟨by every bodiless and holy order, by the Paraclete, and above all by your holy child Jesus the Christ, our Lord and God, your angel and the chief general of your power, and eternal and unending high priest,⟩ … (*Prayers*, 108)

Once the Arian/neo-Arian context is established, one can see its influence also in the opening phrases of each of the two first paragraphs of the post-*sanctus:*

> B 4 Holy also is your only-begotten Son, our Lord and God Jesus the Christ, who ministered to you, his God and Father, in all things, in the varieties of creation, and in appropriate forethought.
> And he propitiated you, his own God and Father, and reconciled you to the world, and freed all men from the impending wrath. (*Prayers*, 109)

That the epiclesis is an obviously consecratory epiclesis of the Holy Spirit, and indeed of the same kind as found in Chrysostom and Basil, lends weight to the claim that this anaphora—or at least its redacted presence in *AC* VIII, is contemporaneous with at least the earlier forms of those other anaphoras. This locates it at a time in the history of

[41] Summarized from Kopecek, "Neo-Arian Religion," 155–160.

the still polemically developing theology of the Trinity as to make it an obvious example of doctrine (in this case neo-Arianism) shaping liturgy. This makes it easier for us now to reread the Chrysostom anaphora and see therein similar, but not as strong, signs of doctrine (in this case of Nicean orthodoxy) shaping liturgy.

However, the icing on the cake of this conclusion can be enjoyed when we compare the trinitarian doxologies that conclude these two anaphoras. In both *The Byzantine Liturgy of St. Basil* and in Chrysostom (cited above in section 2 of this paper) we read:

> … and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify and hymn your all-honorable and magnificent name, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ⟨now and always and to the ages of ages⟩.

But in *AC* VIII we read (in the translation offered by Kopecek):

> We beseech you [God] … that you keep us all in piety, and gather us together in the kingdom of your Christ, who is the God of all sensible and intellectual nature, our king … for through him to you is all glory, reverence, and thanksgiving, *and because of you and after you* (*dia se kai meta se*)[42] honor and worship is to him in the Holy Spirit.[43]

The entire eucharistic liturgy in *AC* VIII ends with a similar doxology:

> For to you is glory, praise, magnificence, reverence, and worship, and after you and because of you (*dia se kai meta se*) to your child Jesus, our lord and king, through whom worthy thanksgiving is owed to you from every rational and holy nature in the Holy Spirit.[44]

When the polemical dust had settled, one tended to find various forms of the classical formula: *to* the Father, *in/through/with* the Son, *and* (plus at times various other of these prepositions,) the Holy Spirit. The final doxology of the *Apostolic Tradition* seems to include or reflect these major Arian and Nicean concerns in a reasonably successful constructive tension:

> … that we may praise and glorify you through your child Jesus Christ; through whom be glory and honor to you, to the Father and the Son,

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[42] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, note that this phrase was later [presumably by non-Arian redactors] changed to "to the Father, the Son, and …" The relatively high number of manuscript variants in the trinitarian doxologies suggest the extent to which the doxologies were a polemical battleground (see Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, *passim)*.

[43] *AC* 8.12.50 (from the Greek Vatican Codex 1506; SC 336:204), Kopecek, "Neo-Arian Religion," 170.

[44] *AC* 8.15.9 (from the Greek Vatican Codex 1506; SC 336:214); Kopecek, "Neo-Arian Religion," 171.

> with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and to the ages of ages.[45]

Continuing the primitive reference to Jesus as "child/*pais*" was obviously congenial to Arian sensitivity, as was also the idea/concept of *through* Christ. However, the Arians took pains to avoid giving glory *to* the Son, which the orthodox Niceans precisely made a point of doing, without the Arian qualifications *because of* and *after* the Father.

It is interesting to note, on the assumption that the origins of the Western liturgy are not as early as the origins of the Eastern liturgies, that the trinitarian doxologies of the Western anaphoras seem to reflect a somewhat more nuanced trinitarian theology. For example from the *Gallican Rite* we read:

> . . . through [Jesus Christ your Son, our God and Lord and Savior, who, with you, Lord, and the Holy Spirit, reigns for ever, eternal Godhead, to the ages of ages.[46]

And from The Mass of the Roman Rite, the *Canon Missae*,

> Through him and with him and in him all honor and glory is yours, O God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all the ages of ages. Amen.[47]

12. *Does Doctrine Shape Liturgy or Liturgy Shape Doctrine?*

We have to remind ourselves again, how little evidence we have that might enable us to give a clear and full answer to this question. Our starting assumption, following both Bradshaw and what seems to be obvious common sense, was that in the early Church the shaping came from both directions. Our brief and obviously superficial survey did not find anything that might weaken this assumption. However, the relatively few crumbs of evidence we did uncover, from within the narrow focus of our search into the early Christian anaphoras, seem to support only one direction: that doctrine, specifically in the Arian controversy, did shape liturgy, and from both the Arian and the orthodox directions. If we can extrapolate from this one situation, it suggests that this shaping is likely to take place whenever there is serious

[45] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 35.
[46] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 150.
[47] Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers*, 166.

disagreement over serious doctrinal issues. There is no question that this clearly took place again in the Roman Church and in the various churches that separated from it at the time of the Reformation. In our own day, the same dynamic, but now in a reverse direction, seems to be taking place in the way the liturgical practices of the main line Protestant churches seem to be reappropriating many of the liturgical traditions and practices from which they distanced themselves at the time of the Reformation.

But is there no evidence to prove that liturgy shapes doctrine? I assume that there is, and that indeed there must be. This assumption is supported by what I believe is a broadly shared Christian intuition and sense of things, which intuition and sense of things seems to be shared, analogously, by most of the other religions of the world. However, since I don't seem to have uncovered any proof for this, the obvious question arises: what is the methodology that would be needed to test the *validity* (and not just the prevalence) of this assumption.

What Can We Learn from This Study?

Our opening assumption that doctrine and liturgy shape each other has survived this brief examination. In terms of readily available evidence, a strong case can be made that doctrine shapes liturgy, especially in situations such as the Arian crisis, where doctrinal controversy is strong. The aggressive rewriting of worship texts at the time of the Reformation confirms this general conclusion. But the reversal of that process whereby some contemporary Christian churches are reappropriating some of what they cast off at the time of the Reformation also seems to be an instance of doctrine shaping liturgy. Such was also and very obviously the case when Roman Catholicism included an explicit epiclesis of the Holy Spirit in all its official new Eucharistic Prayers following the Second Vatican Council. But not all such shaping is felicitous. Witness the unprecedented bluntness (and embarrassing in its theological and ecumenical implications) of the addition of the phrase "We offer you his body and blood" in the "Anamnetic Offering Prayer" of Eucharistic Prayer IV of the Roman Rite. Until then (the late 1960s) a reverent reserve had been the rule (for example: "we offer you this living sacrifice" or "we offer you this bread and this cup"), tempering the aggressive real-presence thinking of traditional Catholicism.

But pastorally, practically, and ecumenically, most of us, I suspect are much more deeply interested in the question whether, and to what extent, and to what end, liturgy might have shaped and be shaping doctrine, and not just doctrine but doctrine and practice. We assume that it does. We hope that it does. And that assumption and hope is what drives much of the care and study that goes into preparation for good liturgical celebration. It is a different kind of question and investigation that will have to take up this question. But in the meantime, as a Christian worshipper, I am convinced that this is indeed happening when I come together to worship with my brothers and sisters.

THEOPHANY AND THE INVISIBLE GOD IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND ART

Robin M. Jensen*

Christianity emerged in a world that was well stocked with visual images of gods. A person living in the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity could not attend the theater, do business in the Forum, visit a public bath, or eat at the table of a wealthy homeowner without encountering statues, paintings, or mosaics that portrayed the traditional gods or goddesses.[1] Early Christian teachers denounced those images as false, foolish, and even demonic, of course. The ubiquitous images of Mars, Artemis, or Isis and all the others for sale in the marketplaces were patently fraudulent in their view—and their proliferation evidence that the gods themselves were non-entities (in the same way that today's multiplicity of shopping mall pseudo-Santa Clauses at Christmas time are clear proof of his non-existence). Even more troublesome than the traditional god and goddess images were the statues or likenesses of emperors set up for veneration. Early Christians, like the Jews prior to them, objected to these objects and determined not to succumb to demands that they offer sacrifice to representations, whether of gods or of human rulers. They took steps to cleanse themselves if they inadvertently came into contact with or passed by one of these images, and were barred from baptism if their professions put them into contact with idols.[2]

As we know from Acts, Paul's address to the Athenians on the Areopagus (Acts 17.22–31) was prompted by his noticing that the city was full of such images for worship. Although he shrewdly complimented his audience on their religiosity, he went on to admonish them that the True God does not live in shrines, nor can be represented by

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[1] See Tertullian, *Idol.* 15; *Spect.* 11, for examples of this problem.

[2] See Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 8.4; Cyprian *Ep.* 31.7.1 and 58.9.2; *Trad. ap.*, 2.16.

the art or imagination of mortals. A little further on we read that when Paul came to Ephesus, he encountered the crass and materialistic protectionism of the idol makers who worried about a loss of sales if Paul were to convince people that the gods fashioned by their craft were not actually gods (Acts 19:23–27). Similar critiques of the popular and profitable practice of making, selling, and venerating images of the gods of the Greco-Roman world dominate much of subsequent early Christian apologetic literature. Often these attacks are characterized by scoffing and derisive comments about the absurdity of thinking such things have any life or power. Minucius Felix's title character Octavius mockingly says to his pagan friend Caecilius:

> By sheer instinct, dumb animals have a much more accurate estimate of your gods: mice, swallows, kites are perfectly well aware than they have no feelings. They trample over them, settle on them, and unless you drive them off, they build their nests even in your god's mouth. Spiders weave their webs over his face and hang their threads even from his head. And it is left to you to wipe, clean, and scour them, protecting, and dreading, gods you have made yourself … This is how covetousness has become enshrined in gold and silver; this is how empty statues have become hallowed forms; this is how Roman superstition has come into being.[3]

Despite their derision of the popular polytheistic practice of making images of the gods in metal, stone, or paint, these same Christian teachers had to acknowledge that most of the intellectuals of their acquaintance also believed that the divine One is invisible to human eyes and beyond mortal comprehension—that the concept of a supreme God without form, name, or description was hardly a new idea.[4] Many teachings of late philosophy did not actually oppose images, however, because they viewed them as functional or pious (often beautiful) symbols that pointed to higher and invisible realities beyond themselves. Plotinus, for example, believed that when artists studied the natural world, they discovered the order and structure apparent in nature, which in turn led them to the transcendent world of ideals and ultimately to experience pure intellectual beauty. Consequently, for Plotinus, works of art were not mere imitation of natural objects (that were

[3] Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 24.9–10, in *The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix* (ed. and trans. G. Clarke; ACW 39; New York: Newman Press, 1974), 94.

[4] On the general subject of Christian aniconism, see Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: an Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

themselves imitations of a higher reality), but drew upon the original form itself as apprehended in the imagination, and thus might even improve on or provide what is lacking in nature. For Plotinus this was as true for a painting of a bowl of fruit as a portrait, or even an image of a god: "Thus Phidias wrought the Zeus upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form Zeus must take if he chose to become manifest to sight."[5]

And yet, the philosophers exhibited a certain disdain for the unsophisticated materialism of popular piety. The second-century satirist, Lucian, in language much like Minucius Felix's, commented on the ludicrousness of people venerating objects that were outwardly beautiful, but on close examination were constructed of very humble materials and contain the nests of mice and rats.[6] In his dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero's character Cotta (representing the Academic school) arguing against Velleius' (the Epicurean's) position that the gods possess no outward appearance or particular shape, contended that humans could only imagine the gods as looking like themselves because the divine nature must be the most beautiful of all forms (to the human eye). The gods thus appeared much like human beings, except perhaps for having exceptional size or beauty. Such appearance not only engendered human devotion (by appealing to their vanity), but made it possible for artists to produce the deities' images by means of handy models.[7]

The images, however, were not necessarily confused with the gods themselves, but were devotional objects that might be used to summon or invoke the presence of the god. They were, for instance, important fixtures at the oracles.[8] The ubiquitous images, from small votive objects to grand monuments were viewed as intrinsic aspects of a

[5] This is one of the ways Plotinus draws upon Aristotle's notion that (unlike Plato) art is not simply mimetic and so even more removed from reality, but rather mimetic but infused with the human recognition of reality as seen in nature. Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.8.1, *Plotinus, The Enneads* (trans. S. MacKenna; London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 422–423; cited in A. Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, 50–51.

[6] Lucian, *Gall.* 24. See also *Iup. trag.* 7–12, where Lucian makes fun of the statues of the gods by setting up a scenario in which they all come into a meeting and have to work out their seating arrangements. Both of these texts were cited by D. Balch, "The Aeropagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. D. Balch et al.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 52–79.

[7] Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.27.75–78.

[8] See H.S. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See When He Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," in *Effigies Dei* (ed. D. van der Plas; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 42–55.

culture, or a component of personal, civic, or ethnic identity. As such, the images of the gods were terribly important, but as pious or patriotic emblems, symbolic representations of the human virtues, or beautiful objects that might lead the mind to higher things, and not as objects that contained the divine nature in themselves.[9]

Like many of the Christian apologists and writers who followed him (including Minucius Felix), Justin Martyr conceded that Christians and pagan poets and philosophers basically agreed on the silliness of worshipping objects as if they were divine beings, and even appealed to this agreement to gain a point or two: "For why need we tell you, who already know, into what forms the craftsmen, carving and cutting, casting and hammering, fashion the materials? And often out of vessels of dishonor, by merely changing the form, and making an image of the requisite shape, they make what they call a god?"[10] All intelligent persons (and not just Christians), he added, shun the idols of the gods as mere "works of mortal hands" and as such inferior to the artisans who made them.[11]

Clement of Alexandria also understood that Christians did not uniquely teach that God is invisible. In fact, for him even more than Justin or any other, this was an important argument against idolatry. In his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement of Alexandria cited Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Cleanthes, the Pythagoreans, and the cynic philosopher Antisthenes (a student of Socrates and the founder of Cynicism)—along with Moses—as exemplars of non-Christian philosophers who had insisted on the transcendent perfection and invisibility of the divine being. Moreover, he added, such knowledge is native to humans whether educated or not, for if they think about it at all, even against their will, they will realize that God is one, unbegotten, indestructible, and that "somewhere on high in the outermost spaces of the heavens, in a private watch-tower, God truly exists forever." And he followed this up with a quote from Euripides: "What nature, say, must we ascribe to God? Who sees all and yet never is seen?"[12]

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[9] For a good summary discussion of the philosophical view of images in this period see A. Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, chap. 1, "The Philosophical Critique of the Image," 13–62.

[10] Justin, *1 Apol.* 9 (*ANF* 1:165).

[11] Justin, *1 Apol.* 20.

[12] Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 6. Quote from Euripides *Frag.* 1129. See P.C. Finney, *The Invisible God*, 44–47. Cf. Clement, *Strom.* 5.12–13.

Origen, responding to the pagan philosopher Celsus, had to admit that they shared a common scorn for images of the gods. Celsus particularly wanted to undermine Christian claims that they had discovered the foolishness of idol worship and cited Heraclitus to that effect: "That those who draw near to lifeless images as if they were gods, act in a similar manner as those who would enter into conversation with houses."[13] Origen thus granted that certain true ideas and principles of morality were implanted in the minds of mortals by God, so that at the divine judgment, no one might have an excuse.

Ironically, however, while they tried to stake out the high ground of philosophical and religious aniconism, early Christian teachers were challenged by passages in their sacred texts that seemed to contradict the idea that God is invisible. On one hand, they accepted without question the ancient philosophical tenet that the Supreme Deity was utterly incomprehensible and indescribable—without form or name—and applied this to the God they worshipped. Like Paul in Athens, they could assert that God cannot be circumscribed by statue, temple, or altar. On the other hand, many of their sacred texts recounted appearances of this God to mortals, and described the divine being in language that was perilously close to ideas that they had elsewhere ridiculed—giving God feet, hands, arms, backside, or bosom; or referring to God taking a walk in the evening breeze (Gen 3:8) or sniffing the odors of burnt offerings (Gen 8:21). And, even though these texts sometimes warned about the dangers of seeing God's "face" (for example, Exod 33:20), there seemed to be no doubt about that fact that God had one, which is precisely what made it dangerous.

Of course, such texts did not then give permission for artists to fashion representations of this God, nor did they provide descriptions of how the Deity appeared. These passages in their foundational narratives clearly gave Christian teachers some awkward moments. For example, in his debate with Celsus, Origen responded to the critique that Christians attributed a human form to God, or believed that God had wings or hands or would literally blow breath into the human at creation, by claiming that Celsus misunderstood that these passages should not be taken literally, but as figurative expressions that showed forth God's relationship with creatures.[14]

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[13] Origen, *Cels.* 1.5. *ANF* 4:398.
[14] Origen, *Cels.* 4.37. *ANF* 4:513–514.

The theophanies of God to Abraham, Jacob, Moses and others as recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures, however, had some common elements with stories of epiphanies of the gods and goddesses of traditional polytheism. The appearance or manifestation of a god in some form or other (for example, a dream, or merely a voice or a shining light) to his or her devotee was a frequently recorded event in inscriptions and the subject of whole books such as the *Epiphanies of Apollo* or the *Epiphanies of the Virgin Goddess*.[15] Among the most famous of such epiphanies was the appearance of Isis to Lucius during his initiation into her cult as cryptically described in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.[16] Cicero, however, scorned the idea that the gods appear to mortals "in person" (in anthropomorphic form), but rather argued that the power and presence of the gods is experienced by means of oracles, divinization, or prophecy.[17] To the extent that early Christian writers wished to distinguish the manifestations of their God from those of other gods, they had a problem.

One approach was to explain such manifestations as symbols or allegories, and criticize those who took them at face value as being stubbornly literal-minded. This tactic paralleled the way contemporary intellectuals interpreted the classical Homeric epics. A second option, not necessarily in conflict with the first, was to affirm the existence of another divine being—the Logos—who could and did take on human attributes for the sake of human redemption. This option allowed early Christian thinkers to affirm God's incomprehensibility (as God) while also allowing God's visibility (as Logos). Thus, in language much like that used to denounce the idol worship of their Gentile neighbors, Christians could criticize Jews for believing that their God could come down to earth and appear to the ancient patriarchs and prophets because such materializations were unworthy of the unchangeable divine nature. What the Jews did not understand, however, was not only that God was invisible, but also that what their patriarchs and prophets actually saw was God's divine Word (subsequently incarnate as Jesus Christ).

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[15] See Robert Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 54–55. Also, see Versnel, "Greco-Roman Epiphany," for an excellent discussion of the different "forms" of a divine epiphany, 50–53.

[16] Apuleius, *Met.* 11.23.

[17] Cicero, *Div.* 1.37f., 79, cited in Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 55–56.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr not only wrote apologies aimed at defending Christianity (and its sacred texts) to a traditional polytheistic audience, he also engaged in a debate with the Jew, Trypho. In both situations, Justin used Logos theology to explain the appearance of God to certain individuals (for example, Abraham and Moses), but he found it especially useful in proving the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. In his first *Apology*, for example, Justin asserted that "all the Jews" believe that it was the "nameless God" or "Father of the Universe" who appeared or spoke to the patriarchs or prophets in Holy Scripture. This belief, he claimed, clearly demonstrates that Jews are both ignorant of God as well as the fact that God's divine Word is also God. Furthermore, Justin continued, it was the Logos who appeared to and spoke with Moses and the others, sometimes as fire, but also sometimes in the guise of an angel or apostle. And when the voice out of the bush said to Moses, "I am who I am—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," it signified that all of these departed patriarchs now belong to Christ (the Word who has come in the present age as a human being).[18]

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin not only asserted but also attempted to prove his point with a close reading of a number of biblical passages, including the appearance of the three persons to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre (Gen 18). Noting the different places in the Greek text (LXX) that one or another visitor is referred to as "Lord" (*kurios*), Justin induced Trypho to acknowledge that more than one figure is referred to in this way. In essence, this passage clearly reveals another God or Lord, subject to the Creator but who exists alongside of the Creator and is the one who carries the Creator's messages to humanity.[19] To strengthen his argument, Justin then pointed out various additional places in the Greek text of Genesis where more than one being is called "God" or "Lord." For example, he cited Psalm 45:6–7 where God appears to be anointed by another God ("your God") and Psalm 110:1 where the Psalmist writes: "The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'."[20]

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[18] Justin, *1 Apol.* 63.
[19] Justin, *Dial.* 56.
[20] Justin, *Dial.* 56 cont.

Concluding his arguments, Justin contended that all other passages of scripture, in which God is said to act, to move, to speak, or even to be seen, refer to the Word rather than the Unbegotten God. In other words, all scriptural allusions to God as being seen or heard (for example, Moses and the bush or Jacob wrestling with the man at Peniel) are manifestations of God the Son or Logos.[21] This clear distinction between the First and the Second God was absolutely necessary to Justin's argument, in order to protect the utter transcendence and incomprehensibility of the Supreme God and to assert the mediating presence of the Logos. He summarized:

> For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up, but remains in his own place, wherever that is, quick to behold and quick to hear, having neither eyes nor ears, but being of indescribable might … Therefore, neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other person, saw the Father and ineffable Lord of all (and also of Christ), but saw him who was according to his will his Son, being God.[22]

According to Justin, then, as a divine agent of the Unbegotten God, the Word can approach and interact with the material and mortal realm. Such agency protects the transcendence of the Supreme God, while allowing interaction with the creation through God's Word. After all, while mixing with creation was tough and dirty work, some (divine) one one had to do it.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus similarly tried to reconcile the contradiction between God's essential transcendence with biblical accounts of divine theophanies. However, unlike Justin, who needed to establish the existence of the Second God, Irenaeus wanted to protect the unity and the uniqueness of the Godhead against the Gnostics, who would have easily understood the manifestations of the "Lord" to Abraham and others as an instance of the appearance of a lesser deity. Thus, Irenaeus interpreted the divine appearances in Hebrew Scripture as presaging the future coming of the Son, not as an actual theophany in historical time. What Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Isaiah saw, therefore, was not God (who

[21] Justin, *Dial.* 57–60.
[22] Justin, *Dial.* 127 (*ANF* 1:263).

is invisible), but a *vision* of the divine Word who has the capacity to be visible, but who would do so only in the future, when he became human. According to him, those "ignorant ones," who claimed that the prophets saw a different God than the "invisible Father of all" understand neither the nature or God nor the function of prophecy. The coming of the Incarnate Christ was the singular way in which God appears to, and is fully present within, creation. This is what the prophets foresaw and foretold, because prophecy, after all, is a setting forth of things that are still to come.[23]

For example, God's refusal to grant Moses a face-to-face interview was offset by a prophetic consolation prize—a look at God's back and the assurance of special consideration in the future. Irenaeus then explained God's putting Moses in the cleft of the rock as prefiguring the Incarnation—the time when God would be wrapped in matter (like Moses inserted into the rock). Eventually God granted Moses' request when he (Moses) and Elijah were allowed to confer with the Transfigured Christ "face to face" (Matt 17:1 and parallels). In the meantime, the prophets could have an intimation or tantalizing "backside" glimpse of that glory and splendor that would temporarily satisfy and prepare them to receive that which will be revealed later on. This is why, when Ezekiel recounted his visions of God (with the four beasts and the wheels), he took care to clarify that "this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God" (Ezek 1:28).[24] Similarly, in the Gospel of John, what Isaiah saw was the glory of Christ, not the splendor of the Unbegotten One (see John 12:41).

In his *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus argued that the divine Word was the Being who appeared to Abraham at Mamre, to Jacob at Bethel, Moses at Horeb, and the Israelites in the wilderness (as a pillar of cloud or fire). But he clarified (in contrast to Justin) that these appearances were revelations of the Begotten One who would *one day* come into the midst of human company. Thus, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses could be called prophets, because they "see things to come,

[23] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.4–5.

[24] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.8–10 and following. Irenaeus continues with this theme, citing the visions of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. See also *Haer.* 4.32.10–11, where he again refers to Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah. Note that the belief that Moses' vision of Christ at the Transfiguration was the promised sight of God also appears in Tertullian, *Marc.* 22 and *Prax.* 14, as well as in Origen, *Hom Exod.* 12 and *Comm. Cant.* 2.13.

which were to take place in human form."[25] However, concerned that the ability to become visible might imply the inferiority (mutability) of the Second Person to the First, Irenaeus emphasized that God's appearance as incarnate did not undermine the divine substance or power, but was rather for the sake of salvation—the economy of redemption—and part of God's plan from the beginning.[26]

Finally, in Irenaeus' view, the way the Word shows forth God is through the divine works of creation, ministry, and salvation, as much as through visions and words heard by the prophets and patriarchs that anticipated future events. Works are the mode by which the Word reveals the divine nature and will, both in the time before the Incarnation and in Christ's life on earth. Washing the disciples' feet, feeding them at the Last Supper, and arousing them in the Garden were the way God "exercised providence" toward those who earnestly desired to see God, in a mode that was "according to their capacity." Finally, as humans saw God in and through the works of Christ, they discovered that they shared the same visions of the ancient prophets, and thus were themselves represented in those texts, even as Irenaeus could argue that the Church herself also is prefigured from the first days. Both Christ and the Church were thus seen by the prophets who are made part of the Christian community through those visionary encounters. In this way, God's redemption extends to all humanity from creation, not just given to those born after the time of Tiberius Caesar.[27]

Tertullian

Tertullian, like Justin and Minucius Felix, ridiculed those foolish enough to worship natural objects or manufactured, inanimate images of the gods.[28] And like Justin, but unlike Irenaeus, he insisted that the "Son of the Creator" actually appeared to and conversed with the prophets and patriarchs and was later incarnate in human flesh. However, he had two different battles to fight against teachings he considered extremely dangerous. First, he took on those who, like Marcion, denied the fleshly and visible reality of the incarnation. Citing the gospels, he insisted

[25] Irenaeus, *Epid.* 44–45.
[26] Irenaeus, *Epid.* 47.
[27] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.22.1–2.
[28] Tertullian, *Idol.* 4.1–4.

that the Father is unknowable except by the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matt 11:27). Thus, he acknowledged the attributes that Marcion used to describe God, such as invisibility, inapproachability, and immutability, were perfectly appropriate. On the other hand, Tertullian insisted, those degrading human qualities that Marcion would deny to God, such as being seen or heard, are necessary for human salvation, and thus *also* applicable to God. It is God the Word, he continued, who actually conversed with the prophets and patriarchs from the beginning, making himself a "little lower than the angels" (Ps. 8:5) and by this lowering of himself, actually learned about and practiced (rehearsed) being in the human state that he "was destined in the end to become."[29] Not only was this the Word's practice run, in a sense, it was also a way by which humans might be more willing to accept the appearance of Christ when he did come as incarnate—a kind of validation based on having seen it before, at least in some form.[30]

In Tertullian's view, the story of Abraham's three guests in Genesis 18 should be interpreted as a visit of Christ (before his nativity) and two angels. However, he realized that he had to explain this instance of divine incarnation prior to Christ's virginal birth. Because God by nature does not deceive, all three materialized in actual (not illusory) human flesh, even though none were born from a human mother. Angelic beings, after all, he said, cannot deal with humans in any way except in human substance. However, their flesh ("from whatever source derived") did not have to undergo birth, because it was not going to die. In contrast, the flesh of the Word on this occasion also was obtained without birth, because it was not at this juncture prepared to die for humanity's sake. But, as he had argued above, the enfleshed Word used this opportunity to learn to hold intercourse amongst mortals. The accompanying angels, on the other hand, both received and divested themselves of their flesh from whatever place they obtained it. Nonetheless, it was true flesh. After all, Tertullian concluded, if God can one day make humans into angels (as promised), God certainly could make angels into humans.[31]

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[29] Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.27.

[30] Tertullian, *Prax.* 16.

[31] Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.9. In his treatise, *Carn. Chr.* (6.3), Tertullian argues against certain disciples of Marcion who taught that Christ might have human flesh without being born because angels have appeared in the flesh "without the intervention of the

Toward the end of his fifth book against Marcion, Tertullian cited Paul's letter to the Colossians to support his contention that Christ was the visible manifestation of God to the prophets and patriarchs of scripture. Just as the writer of Colossians calls Christ the "Image of the Invisible God" (Col. 1:15), Tertullian proclaimed, "We similarly say that the Father of Christ is invisible, for we know that it was the Son who was seen in ancient times … as the image of the Father himself."[32] However, this ability of the Word, to become visible to mortals, should not be used to separate the Eternal Word from the First Person, or to subordinate the latter to the former. He insisted that the two divine Persons are co-eternal, the same in substance, and united in intention and in deed. The difference is merely one of dispensation—one does appear to humans and the other does not. The Word is visible in virtue of its being a derived being and not an un-derived one. Furthermore, that epistle's subsequent line, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," indicates that all constituent elements of creation, whether visible or invisible, angelic or human, fleshly or spiritual, were created in, through, and for the Word, who "reconciled all things to himself through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:16–20).[33]

Tertullian employed this idea of dispensation, or divine condescension to human need to deal with God "in a human way" to assert an essential point of distinction within the Trinity against the modalist Praxeas. Turning to various scriptural testimonies of God's appearance, Tertullian asserted that while humans may not see God in God's full majesty, they may see the Second Person, by virtue of "the dispensation of his derived existence." The Supreme God is *predicated* by invisibility, while the eternal Logos is not. Therefore, while the First Person is absolutely invisible, God the eternal Word may be invisible or visible. Because invisibility is not one of the Word's unconditional quali-

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womb," Tertullian retorts that the difference between Christ and the angels is that Christ descended into flesh with the intention of dying. Angels did not have to die, and therefore did not have to be born. But to be capable of death, Christ had to be born. In another passage in *Carn. Chr.* 3, Tertullian argues that this assumption of human flesh confirms Christ's superiority, invulnerability to the dangers of bodily change, and his transcendence of all known physical laws rather than a mark of subordination or weakness (versus Marcion).

[32] Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.19.

[33] Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.19.

ties, it may become visible, even before the incarnation, in visions and dreams.[34] The First Person, by contrast, can never be seen.

Tertullian then cited the seemingly contradictory passages of scripture, in which some may see God and live while others cannot (for example, Jacob at Peniel versus Moses at Sinai) as proof of the distinctions of First and Second divine "faces." This, to him, was only further proof of the distinctions of the Trinity and he pointed to the way that the Gospels and Epistles speak of God as alternately visible and invisible. The Gospel of John, for example, claimed that "no one has ever seen God" (John 1:18a; cf. John 5:37), while also proclaiming that, "whoever sees me sees him who sent me" (John 12:45). Here, he argued, is an absolute demonstration of his point. The humanly incarnate Son shows forth the "face" of the Father to whom he belongs and by whom he is begotten—a reiteration of Paul's description of the face of Jesus Christ as shining the light of the knowledge of the glory of God into human hearts (2 Cor 4:6).

Origen

Origen also saw the incarnation of Christ as the essential and unique way that God's invisible (and unbearable) divine glory, could be manifest. Mortal eyes cannot bear the light of God directly, but require an intermediary brightness that assists them little by little, until they can become accustomed to "bear the light in its clearness." Because of this limited human capacity, Origen stressed, a mediating image is necessary—one that alone knows God (Matt 11:27, John 1:18), and can express or reveal the form of God to those who are capable of it. And this, Origen claimed, is why the author of Hebrews can call Christ the "brightness of God's glory," as well as "the express image of God's substance or subsistence" (Heb 1:3). In order to make this principle more understandable, Origen used a surprising analogy that he acknowledged was problematic, because it borrowed from "the realm of material things":

> Let us suppose, for example, that there existed a statue of so great a size as to fill the whole world, but which on account of its immensity was imperceptible to anyone, and that another statue was made similar to it in every detail, in shape of limbs and outline of features, in form

[34] Tertullian, *Prax.* 14.

> and material, but not in its immense size, so that those who were unable to perceive and behold the immense one could yet be confident that they had seen it when they saw the small one, because this preserved every line of limbs and features and the very form and material with an absolutely indistinguishable similarity.[35]

The image here is striking because of its apparent use of a figure for God that so closely approximates an idol statue. However, Origen defended his analogy as merely meant to demonstrate how the Son of God, being "brought within the narrow compass of a human body," could become "an express image of God's substance or subsistence" (Heb 1:3) that could not be perceived in its full glory or its "immense and invisible brightness." God is light and the only-begotten Word is the "brightness of that light" whose purpose is to assist eyes that were in the dark to become gradually adjusted to and able to endure the source of that brightness.[36] Even more than Irenaeus, Origen insisted that the divine image that humans perceive in Christ is shown forth in his works rather than in his human manifestations. It is by Christ's activities, not in his mere physical existence, that humanity knows the divine majesty and power.

A little further on in his treatise *On First Principles*, Origen refuted those who claimed that the God of the Hebrew prophets and patriarchs was distinct from and inferior to the Supreme God revealed by Christ. In the same way that Tertullian had, Origen acknowledged outward and potentially misleading passages in the Hebrew scripture that could be taken to refer to two different Gods, one visible and the other invisible. But while others like Tertullian simply made the Logos the subject of all theophanic appearances, Origen moved the discussion to a higher plane. Rather than a positing a duality of divine beings, Origen suggested that readers of the text should rather perceive different types or levels of vision. The idea of "seeing" is therefore not meant in a literal sense, but rather as a metaphor or an allegory. "We must suppose Moses to have seen God, not by looking at him with eyes of flesh, but by understanding him with the vision of the heart and the perception of the mind, *and in this part only*."[37]

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[35] Origen, *Princ.* 1.2.8 (trans. G.W. Butterworth; Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973), 21–22. The editor points out that Jerome later refers to this passage in *Ep. Ad Avitum* 2.

[36] Origen, *Princ.* 1.2.8, cont.

[37] Origen, *Princ.* 2.4.3, cont. Butterworth, 98–99 (emphasis mine).

Here Origen reiterated his position that God can have no body that could be perceived or known, but is incorporeal and utterly outside human sensate knowledge. Jesus' statement in Matthew's Gospel ("no one knows the Father except the Son"—Matt 11:27) in some sense clarified the meaning of his statement in John 1: because the language of "seeing" is equivalent to and best replaced by the language of "knowing." As he says, it is "one thing to see and be seen, another to perceive and be perceived, or to know and to be known."[38] Moreover, Origen extended this non-sighted "knowing" to the way humans encounter the whole Trinity, because the ability to be seen properly belongs only to corporeal bodies. The divine Triad, thus "transcends the limits of vision" as it is by nature incorporeal. Intellectual nature, he declared, is only capable of knowing and being known. It is *never* seen, even by itself.[39] But, for Origen, even in this intellectual vision God is known only through the Word.

Origen may have drawn upon the writings of Philo on these matters, because Philo also interpreted the biblical theophanies as mystical rather than corporeal appearances. For example, according to Philo, Moses' request to see God's face was made even though Moses realized that such a request could never be granted, but still he persisted until he entered

> into the thick darkness where God was—that is, into a conception regarding the Existent Being that belongs to the unapproachable region where there are no material forms … And out of this quest there accrues to Moses a vast boon, namely to apprehend that the God of real Being is apprehensible to no one, and to see precisely that He is incapable of being seen.[40]

Such a mystical exegesis resolves the contradiction between the superficial implications—and even the apparent contradictions of the text of Exodus—and Philo's assertion that nothing can be said descriptively of God's appearance, and that no one may have an actual physical view of the divine.

Philo also claimed that certain biblical statements of God must be understood in a figurative and not a literal sense. For example, he says, when the text says that "The Lord went down to see that city and that

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[38] Origen, *Princ.* This argument could be applied to the text of John 1:18.
[39] Origen, *Princ.* 2.4.3, Butterworth, 99.
[40] Philo, *Post.* 4. See also *Fug.* 141.

tower" [of Penuel, Judg 8], it did not mean to suggest that God actually came down and walked around as if God had a human body, but rather that God fills all places at once and both contains and pervades everything in the universe. The divine Being, he claimed, is both invisible and incomprehensible, and at the same time everywhere and in everything.[41] For Philo, however, asserting that the invisible God also had an "image" was necessary, as the first chapter of Genesis claims that humanity was created in that image (and "after the likeness"). Philo associated the Image with the pre-existent Word of God—the agent of creation and the model for humanity whose likeness may be achieved through the practice of intellectual and moral virtue. The likeness that humans bore to this original Image was not according to any external manifestation, then, but according to the degree that humans shared in divine Reason. Philo insisted that no one could "represent this likeness as one to a bodily form; for neither is God in human form, nor is the human body God-like."[42]

Thus, like Philo, Origen used "sight" as a metaphor for intellectual perception, and interpreted the stories of God's appearance to the Hebrew patriarchs allegorically. For example, in his fourth homily on Genesis, he gave the story of Abraham's divine visitation at Mamre a moral and mystical meaning. He attended to the differences between the ways Abraham and Lot receive and treat their guests, the significance of the place name ("Mamre means 'vision'"), the symbolic rather than superficial meanings that we can draw from the fact that Sarah was standing behind Abraham, or that God speaks of "descending to see the iniquities of Sodom," and so forth. Origen was apparently uninterested in the actual identity of the three mysterious guests. They obviously could not be God, because all three Persons of the Trinity are invisible.[43] Similarly, in his commentary on the Song of Songs, Origen suggested that the time of Abraham's visit (midday) denotes the soul's pursuit of the clear, bright, light of knowledge (see Song 1:7).[44] Later he identified the call of the lover to the dove in the clefts of the rock: "let me see our face" (Song 2:14), with Moses also in the shelter of the rock, where he could see God's back, as he was not allowed to see God's face. The bride of the Song is accorded something Moses was not until the

[41] Philo, *Conf.* 134–140.
[42] Philo, *Opif.* 23.69.
[43] Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 4.
[44] Origen, *Comm. Cant.* 2.4.

Transfiguration: she may contemplate the glory of God with "unveiled face" (Exod 34:33–35; 2 Cor 3:1–18; 2 Cor 4:3).[45]

In summary, then, three different patristic theories explain the theophanies of God in the stories of the patriarchs and prophets of the Hebrew scriptures. For Justin Martyr, demonstrating that God's Word showed up in those sacred texts as a distinct Being (that would become incarnate in Christ), not only established the truth of Christian logos theology against the Jews, but also protected the absolute transcendence and perfection of God.

Tertullian's solution was much like Justin's in that he saw the Logos as the One who was manifest in these epiphanic texts, but his arguments were far more developed, first in response to the Marcionites against whom he insisted that the Word could appear in a bodily nature (even before the incarnation) and second against the modalists, where he used these appearances to establish the distinction of the Son from the Father.

Irenaeus' different view, that the Word's appearance was only a prophetic or anticipatory manifestation, was advanced in response to gnostic arguments that these texts proved the existence of an inferior god or demiurge. Irenaeus' solution protected the unity, perfection, and uniqueness of God in the face of alternative cosmological schemes.

Like Irenaeus, Origen did not understand these theophanies to be bodily appearances of the Word. And like Irenaeus, Origen believed that the glory of God, even after the Incarnation, was shown through the works of Christ, rather than in the Christ's fleshly nature. But, Origen offered something different—a third way of interpreting these passages. For him these theophanies, while referring to the Word, were not to be understood in any literal sense as actual "appearances," but rather metaphors for intellectual perception—for coming to "know" God through the works of the Son, rather than to "see" an external appearance in such manifestations. Only in the mind could one contemplate the glory of God—at least until some future time, when the purified soul will finally be able to withstand the full brightness of divine glory.

[45] Origen, *Comm. Cant.* 2.13.

The Visible God of Christian Art

Christian visual art was emerging almost exactly at the time when these arguments were being promulgated about the essential invisibility of God and the ways that the Incarnation of Christ could yet show forth the divine glory.[46] The oldest and most important examples of Christian painting come from Rome, in the Catacomb of Callixtus, named for the deacon (later Bishop of Rome) who was, according to tradition, entrusted with the management of this ancient Christian cemetery. Given the place's probable oversight by some high-ranking member of the clergy, one may surmise that the inclusion of figurative wall paintings on the walls and ceilings of this burial place did not constitute a form of idolatry in the minds of the officials who must have known (if not explicitly approved) of their existence.[47] More relevant to this study, however, than the problem of whether visual art in general was idolatrous, is the question of how this earliest art represented (or did not represent) the figure of the divine One.

Undoubtedly, most of early Christian art has disappeared, having been destroyed by natural erosion, urban renewal, deliberate destruction, inept attempts at preservation or from other causes. Some of it still remains to be discovered. Nevertheless, these earliest remains show that Christians both adapted familiar motifs from Roman iconography (birds, garlands, shepherd and sheep, etc.) to convey key Christian values and beliefs about salvation and the afterlife, as well as developed new iconographic themes based on biblical narratives. Perhaps significantly, the earliest and most common biblical narratives Christians chose to portray come from the Hebrew Scriptures (known to them in the Greek translation) and include scenes from the stories of Jonah, Noah, Daniel, Moses, the Three Hebrew Youths, and Abraham's offering of Isaac. Within a short time—by the middle of the third century—scenes from the Gospels also began to appear, and were

[46] The dating of earliest Christian art is usually placed between 190 and 210, based on the oldest extant examples, mostly from the area around Rome. For more discussion of the problem of dating, as well as discussion on the related problem of the lack of art prior to the third century, see Finney, *The Invisible God*, chap. 5, 99–145.

[47] For more analysis of the question of the relationship between Christian art and supposed Christian aniconism see R. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), 13–15, and *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), chap. 1. The present paper was originally written prior to this monograph, and much of it was subsequently incorporated into the manuscript for the book.

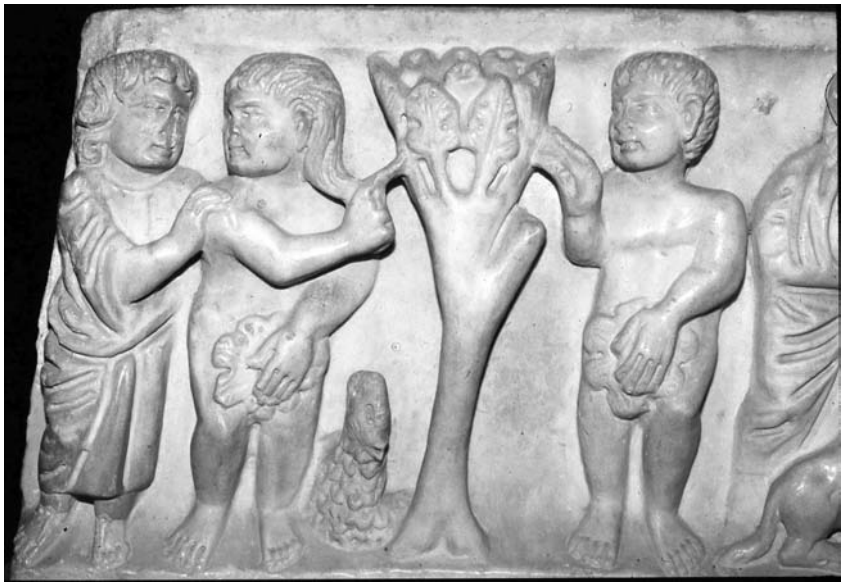

Fig. 1. Detail from cover, Sarcophagus of Optatina Reticia, mid-fourth century CE, Musée de l'Arles Antique

often juxtaposed with the earlier representations of Old Testament figures. The most common of these showed Christ as healer and wonder worker (healing the paralytic, raising Lazarus, multiplying the loaves and fishes), but also included scenes of Jesus' baptism and the visit of the three magi.

Significantly, perhaps, the texts cited by early Christian writers as theophanies of the divine, including the arrival of Abraham's three visitors at the Oak of Mamre, Jacob's wrestling match at Peniel, and the manifestation of God in the burning bush, are not among the earliest known artistic compositions. Although the arrival of Abraham's three visitors at Mamre came to be an important image, especially for later iconography, it did not occur in the third or even in the early fourth century. Nor are there extant early representations of Moses and the burning bush, or the vision of Ezekiel. Instead, we see an emphasis on human heroes rather than divine epiphanies. We do, however, have two very intriguing images that occur relatively early (perhaps late third or early fourth century) that appear to show the pre-incarnate Word within a biblical narrative scene.

The first of these is the representation of what is usually called the "fall" of Adam and Eve. In these scenes, we see the expected naked

Fig. 2. Detail from main frieze, Sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Callixtus, late fourth century, Museo Pio Cristiano (Rome)

Adam and Eve, standing on either side of a tree around which a snake is coiled. There is, however, an additional male figure, tapping either Adam or Eve on the shoulder as if to tell them that they have been caught in the act of disobedience (figs. 1–2). This character, often overlooked by commentators, might be interpreted as God the Father, but by his youthful appearance and frequently by his facial similarity to Adam, we can easily see that he is meant to be the Word in human form, who will eventually come to earth as the "New Adam." The iconography, here, clearly suggests that the Word (and not the invisible Father) was the divine being who was "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" and who called out to the man "where are you?" (Gen 3:8–9).

Irenaeus was explicit about the Word's participation in the creation of humans, and speaks of the Son and the Holy Spirit as the two "hands" of God. But Theophilus of Antioch is even more specific about the Word's presence in the Garden and the conversation with Adam and Eve. Theophilus, seeing the need to explain how it was that God could have walked around in Paradise says:

> Hear what I say. The God and Father indeed, of all cannot be contained, and is not found in a place, for there is no place of his rest; but his Word, through whom he made all things, being his power and his wisdom,

Fig. 3. Detail from cover, Sarcophagus now in the Museo Pio Cristiano (Rome), late fourth century.

Fig. 4. Detail of Sarcophagus of Marcia Romania Celsa, ca. 330 CE, Musée de l'Arles Antique.

> assuming the person of the Father and Lord of all, went to the garden in the person of God, and conversed with Adam. For the divine writing itself teaches us that Adam said that he had heard the voice. But what else is this voice but the Word of God, who is also his Son?[48]

This statement, interestingly, comes in the midst of a discourse against image worship, in which Theophilus has just condemned the folly of idols, insisting that the divine Being is incomprehensible and indescribable.[49] However, Theophilus continued, following the precepts of Paul and echoing the arguments of Irenaeus, even though God is invisible to

[48] Theophilus, *Autol.* 2.22, *ANF* 2:103.
[49] Theophilus, *Autol* 1.3.

Fig. 5. Detail from Sarcophagus of the Two Brothers, third quarter, fourth century, now in the Museo Pio Cristiano (Rome).

the external eye, God can be perceived in the world—through God's work. Additionally, Theophilus, like Justin, argued that the Word is the visible form of God, and the divine Being who can interact with human beings, even prior to the incarnation.[50]

The second of these images is a representation of the three young men in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:19–30). Often juxtaposed with Noah in his ark or Daniel and his lions, in this image the three youths are

[50] Theophilus, *Autol* 2.22.

Fig. 6. Detail from the Dogmatic Sarcophagus, mid-third century, now in the Museo Pio Cristiano (Rome).

dressed in typical Babylonian costumes (pointed caps and short tunics), their hands lifted in prayer, standing amidst flames coming out of a furnace sometimes being stoked by a servant. In at least two examples, however, the three are joined by a fourth figure who sits with his arms folded (rather than outstretched in prayer), in the midst of the flames almost as if he is an untroubled observer (figs. 3–4). This fourth person, identified by Nebuchadnezzar in the text as having the appearance like a son of the gods (Dan 3:25), is certainly meant to represent the Divine Word. Irenaeus particularly notes the appearance of the Son of God in this passage, acting as the hand of God, working out a marvel in order to demonstrate the power of God over against nature, the weakness of the flesh, or the power of death.[51]

God the Father is not represented in the art of the third century, although some early fourth century images of Moses receiving the law and Abraham offering his son Isaac include a disembodied hand of

[51] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.5.2. Note that here Irenaeus does not make the point that the Son is an anticipatory manifestation.

Fig. 7. Detail from mid fouth-century sarcophagus formerly in the Basilica of S. Paul's outside the walls, now in the Museo Pio Cristiano (Rome).

God to suggest the divine presence (fig. 5). This disembodied hand, seen also in some contemporary Jewish iconography, comes to be a standard mode for representing the "invisible" one's voice.[52] During the fourth century, the figure of God the Father actually shows up with some frequency on relief sculpture—represented as a seated male figure, sometimes in the act of creating Adam and Eve with the help of

[52] On the subject of the representation of God the Father in early Christian art see Jensen, *Face to Face*, chap. 4, 115–130.

Fig. 8. Christ Pantocrator, 6th century (encaustic on panel). Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt / Bridgeman Art Library.

the Son and Holy Spirit (fig. 6), and sometimes receiving the offerings of Cain and Abel (fig. 7).[53] However, these human-like appearances of the First Person of the Trinity disappeared by the end of the fourth century, not to reappear again until the art of the West in the early Middle Ages, when he shows up again as a bearded Ancient One—an image that subsequently becomes ubiquitous in Western art.

Christian iconography from the end of the third century included many representations of Christ based on passages from the Gospels,

[53] On these images see R. Jensen, "The Trinity and the Economy of Salvation," *JECS* 7 (1999): 527–546.

showing him as healer, wonder worker, or teacher (see fig. 2). These images should not be understood as portraits, or as Christian versions of pagan images, because they are essentially narrative images and visually reflect the position that Origen enunciated—that the divine image that humans perceive in Christ is shown forth specifically in his works. By showing Christ's works, the emphasis on his person, the viewer beholds the divine glory. By the end of the fourth century, however, this began to change, as a portrait of Christ first appears—an image without any narrative context or reference to his works. From that point on, the frontal, iconic, portrait of Christ becomes one of the most important and most produced images of Christian art (fig. 8).

Along with the emergence of the portrait of Christ comes the emergence of the portraits of Mary, the Apostles, and the saints. That such portrait images did not exist during the third and early fourth centuries may be attributable to the continuing fear of and contempt for human-made images of the gods. However, within a generation of the Peace of the Church, the idols of pagan religion, or even the portrait of the emperor, were no longer so threatening. Instead, the Christian world began to be filled with new holy images, which were understood according to good philosophical principles, as not holy in themselves, but in their ability to lead the mind to the truth that they represented but that lay beyond them. And, as if the painters of these icons were aware of the writings of Tertullian or Origen, they could defend their presentation of the face of the incarnate Son as the unique way that God's glory could be known in the world (2 Cor 4:6), and by its ineffable beauty, direct the human gaze to the "pure seal of the Father and its perfect impress."[54]

[54] This phrase taken from Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat. theol.* 4.20; *NPNF*^{2} 8:317, trans. slightly adapted.

GOD AND THE POOR IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT*

Susan R. Holman**

With the recent proliferation of studies on poverty and religion in late antiquity,[1] theologians and scholars may now more effectively nuance traditional studies of 'God in early Christian thought' by engaging with the pervasive and often controversial theme of 'God in the poor.' This theme, closely associated with soteriology (in 'redemptive alms') and with some inevitable discussion about christology (in the association of the poor with Christ) thus directly relates to the topic of this book. The present essay briefly discusses two particular aspects of this theme where these issues relate to the doctrine of God in early Christian

* It is an honor to offer this paper in memory of Lloyd Patterson. My greatest regret is that there is little here to answer that ponderous question that echoes among my fond memories of Lloyd: "What about Origen?"

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[1] See, for example, Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne, eds., *Poverty in the Roman World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures; Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002); Brian E. Daley, S.J., "Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy," *JECS* 7 (1999): 431–461; Robert Doran, trans., *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa* (Cistercian Studies Series 208; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 2006); Richard Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice (313–450)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev, eds., *Giving in Monotheistic Religions* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, in press); Verna E.F. Harrison, "Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ According to Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 151–164; Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2001); Susan R. Holman, ed., *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008); and Wendy Mayer, "Poverty and society in the world of John Chrysostom" in *Social and Political Archaeology in Late Antiquity*, (ed. Luke Lavan, William Bowden, Adam Gutteridge and Carlos Machado; Late Antique Archaeology 3.1. Leiden: Brill, 2006), 465–484. Similar studies have also appeared on responses to poverty in the late antique and early histories of Judaism and Islam.

sources. These two are the topics of heterodoxy and the image from Matthew 25:31–46 of Christ and the poor in the last judgement.

The discussion is organized into three parts. The essay begins by outlining the dominance of the theme of 'Christ in the poor' in certain patristic texts, and the critical relevance of this theme for a full and nuanced understanding of 'God in early Christian thought' as it relates to both social ethics and christology. Section 2 moves into a discussion of how this theme is—or is not—evident in a number of examples of early Christian rhetoric concerning issues of 'heterodox' christology. In section 3, the essay reflects on two sources, one text and one early Christian image, as examples of how the needy poor effectively disappear in the eschatological focus on that very same text—Matthew 25:31–46—that is best known for this classic rhetorical association of the poor with Christ. In a brief concluding summary, the essay argues that no theological understanding of God in early Christian thought is complete without a discussion of the relationship between the divine and the needy human person; but that this relationship is ever, ultimately, directed to the eschatological image of Christ, the second person of the Trinity, in whose judgement-day presence the bodies of the poor effectively disappear.

Christ and the Poor in Early Christian Thought

It is widely recognized that the poor in the early Christian thought of late antiquity were most often imaged in homiletic rhetoric that closely identified them with Christ incarnate, as in some mysterious way a moral embodiment of the second person of the Trinity. This view of the special, functional presence of Christ in 'ordinary' destitute human beings by no means diminished—nor was it ever confused with—the theological uniqueness of the historical Jesus Christ within the godhead. Nevertheless, early Christian writers, taking the text of Matthew 25:31–46 at its word, repeatedly hammered out the message of Christ's embodied presence in the poor. Persons who practiced φιλοπτώχεια, love for the poor, consequently offered up a service to God, directly, in behavior that characterized them as the proverbial 'sheep,' those on the judge's right hand whose actions are lauded as they are welcomed into eternity.

John Chrysostom is perhaps the best-known example among the Greek fathers for stridently asserting this view, as Swiss-Protestant

scholar Rudolf Brändle has clearly demonstrated in his quarter century of research on Chrysostom's exegesis of the Matthew text. In a recent study where Brändle argues that this view invites important new scholarship on soteriology in Chrysostom's work, he writes,

> The countless allusions to single aspects of this text in the homilies of John Chrysostom are to be seen in the context of his emphasis on the full incarnation of Jesus Christ. The great preacher paints the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick, or imprisoned Christ most impressively before the eyes of his congregation: Christ walks through the streets of our city today, meeting us daily in the form of the miserable beggar. He has made human destitution his own.[2]

Similar patristic imagery is evident in the way Gregory of Nazianzus concludes his well-known *Oration* 14, "On the love of the poor," which Brian Daley translates, "Let us minister to Christ's needs, let us give Christ nourishment, let us clothe Christ, let us gather Christ in, let us show Christ honor … through the needy, who today are cast down on the ground, so that when we all are released from this place, they may receive us into the eternal tabernacle in Christ himself."[3]

This gospel image, and perhaps also Gregory's sermon, were so influential for later readers that even the Protestant reformers spoke of giving 'to' Christ in the poor. A 1519 translation of Gregory's *Or.* 14 by Johannes Oecolampadius, who was to become by 1529 the city of Basel's leading reformer, was available in German by 1521, and was followed by Oecolampadius's own treatise on the subject in 1523.[4] In 1522, Martin Luther called the poor "living images of God,"[5] a view Ulrich Zwingli also expressed, writing in both his *Commentary on True and False Religion* and his treatise, *The Shepherd*, "the poor are true images of God."[6] Gregory's images of the 'Christ-poor'[7] may have been a commonplace concept for these three reformers; Oecolampadius and

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[2] Rudolf Brändle, "This sweetest passage: Matthew 25:31–46 and assistance to the poor in the homilies of John Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 133. This is a further development of his classic study, *Matt. 25:31–46 im Werk des Johannes Chrysostomus* (BGBE 22; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1979).

[3] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 14.40, in Brian E. Daley, S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 97.

[4] Lee Palmer Wandel, *Always Among Us: Images of the Poor in Zwingli's Zurich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 41.

[5] Quoted in Wandel, *Always Among Us*, 40, n. 17.

[6] Wandel, *Always Among Us*, 60.

[7] In this essay the phrase 'Christ-poor' refers to the conceptual alignment of Christ imagery with the bodies of the poor, as characterized in Matthew 25:31–46.

Zwingli were among those who opposed Luther's view on the eucharist in the 1520s, and the three were physically in the same space at the same time, together, to sign (and quarrel over) the Fifteen Articles on Evangelical doctrine at the Colloquy of Marburg in early October 1529.[8] Luther's sermons were printed in Basel, and it is no stretch of the imagination to guess that Oecolampadius's translation and treatises on the poor may have reached Luther despite their disagreements on other issues.

This patristic association of the image of Christ with the bodies of the destitute poor is not limited to Greek sources. It is also found in Latin texts, most famously the story of St. Martin dividing his military cloak with a beggar at the city gate, the recipient later in a dream identified as—or aligned with—Christ. Gregory of Tours reiterates this in his festal homily praising Martin as "worthy to clothe Christ [who had appeared] as a beggar."[9] Among Syriac sources from late antiquity John of Ephesus, in the fifth century, has the holy activist, Euphemia, condemning her neighbors' opulence "while God is overcome in the market, swarming with lice and fainting with hunger."[10] And the image of the Christ-poor is perhaps nowhere more vividly explicit than in Jacob of Sarug's sixth-century sermon "On the love of the poor," where he constructs the metaphor at elaborate length:

> The Provisioner [of the worlds] for your sake was made a beggar in the streets,
> in hunger and need along with the poor of this world …
> He is exalted above the ranks of heavenly beings,
> But when a poor person stands at your door, you see Him!
> He at whose fierce heat (even) the seraphs of fire cover (their faces),
> Is here, begging bread from you …
> He with whom the Creation is full and cannot contain Him,
> Is knocking to enter your house in the person of the despised and insignificant …
> He has given you His own Body—give him bread …
> You drink His blood—give him to drink, for He is parched.
> He gave you radiance to put on from the (baptismal) water …

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[8] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, (trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart; New York: Doubleday, 1990); a reproduction of the signatures is on 241.

[9] Gregory of Tours, "A sermon in praise of St. Martin" in Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 306.

[10] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 12 in Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 130.

(In return for) all you give him … in the poor …
He will repay you with the raiment of light in the New Age.[11]

In these rich contrasts typical of Syriac poetry, Jacob envisions Christ and the Christ-poor in terms of those very polarities that ancient Greek philosophers had traditionally viewed as incompatible: earth and divinity. This particular sermon starkly demonstrates what Jacob sees as the paradox of God: one who cannot be contained within creation and yet who demands, in an embodied reception, material donations that address the physical needs of the destitute poor.

Nonetheless, not all sources about God in early Christian thought that have clear associations with the Christian response to the needy poor use such literal terminology as that of Christ in the poor. While this image where it does occur is always associated in some way with Matthew 25:31–46, another text commonly cited in patristic writings on God and the poor in early Christian relief rhetoric is the story of the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus, in Luke 16:19–31. In this text the embodied poor person, Lazarus, is nothing more or less than a homeless beggar who dies and is carried to the comfort of Abraham's bosom, while the misanthropic rich man, who shares nothing with him, is tormented in hell. Like the Matthew text, Luke's poor person is the measure by which the rich is ultimately judged, but in Luke there is no explicit elision of the poor with Christ. Nonetheless, certain patristic writers clearly assumed an elision between the two Gospel stories. Chrysostom, in his sermons on the Luke text, concludes his second homily by noting that "not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor…. If we have this attitude, we will certainly offer our money; and by *nourishing Christ in poverty here* and laying up great profit hereafter, we will be able to attain the good things which are to come, by the grace and kindness of our Lord, Jesus Christ."[12]

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[11] Jacob of Sarug, *Homily on the Love of the Poor* in *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis* (ed. Paul Bedjan; Lipsiae, Otto Harrassowitz, 1906), 2:828–834; the entire homily is 2:816–836. The translation here is by Sebastian Brock. I am grateful to Professor Brock for permission to quote from this unpublished translation. He also suggests that Jacob may have been familiar with Aphrahat's late third- or early fourth-century Syriac sermon "On the Love of the Poor" [= *Dem.* 20]; for that text see M.-J. Pierre, trans., *Aphraate le Sage Persan. Exposés* (SC 359; Paris: Cerf, 1989), 789–807. For a recent discussion of Aphrahat's text, see Adam H. Becker, "Anti-Judaism and Care for the Poor in Aphrahat's Demonstration 20," *JECS* 10 (2002): 305–327.

[12] John Chrysostom, "Second sermon on Lazarus and the rich man" in *St. John Chrysostom: On Wealth and Poverty* (trans. Catharine P. Roth; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 55. The emphasis is mine.

Thus this aspect of early Christian ethics, the category in which studies on poverty are usually placed, directly relates to this book's theme of 'God in early Christian thought' precisely because of the pervasive patristic social concept that closely associates the second person of the Trinity with the poor—both 'in' the poor, as expressed in the texts cited above, and as a sacralizing and theological patron for the poor, the focus of the discussion that follows below. These two aspects of God as they relate to poverty relief are distinctly different, but no study of the second theme can proceed entirely separated from the dominant patristic imagery of the first.

Tensions over heterodox christology in early Christian philanthropy

Given this close association, outlined above, between the literal body of the poor in patristic texts and their language about the effective presence of Christ in the destitute, one might logically ask two questions. First, how did variant (or 'heterodox') views of the second person of the Trinity in early Christian thought express this association? Some groups, such as Gnostics and Manichaeans, were condemned for expressing views of the flesh that were incompatible with the concept of divine embrace of physical and mutable corruption. Others, such as Arians and those influenced by later 'Semi-Arian' developments, reflect 'subordinationist' views of Christ that would, one might expect, minimize any 'divine' or 'sacralizing' effect on the poor by whom Christ is said to judge the rich. In the sixth century another alternative viewpoint, the aphthartodocetic teaching of Julian of Halicarnassus, affirmed Christ's divinity in terms that (apparently) entirely denied the mutability of his flesh. How might this view of the historical first-century Christ influence the aphthartodocetic understanding of Christ's role in the acutely mutable and even mutilated bodies of the sixth-century poor? These theological differences about the second person of the Trinity in early Christian thought invite a second obvious question, one that has not, to my knowledge, been addressed to date: How does such heterodoxy—and related 'orthodox' fears of heterodoxy/heresy—express itself in rhetoric about the relationship between God and the poor? These are two distinctly separate questions that have two very different answers.

The answer to the first question—how are obviously 'heterodox' views of Christ expressed in texts that also speak of the needy poor?—

is lamentably brief. We rarely, if ever, find texts that distinctly discuss this particular combination of themes at all. Thus textual evidence is lacking that might allow any properly-nuanced study of the way that quarrels over either Arian or Chalcedonian christology, by groups their opponent labeled 'monophysities,' 'heretics,' or 'Nestorians' on the basis of how they described Christ's divinity/humanity, might have influenced their respective philanthropic rhetoric. The surviving texts of some groups who held alternative christological views, such as those of the Gnostics and Manichaeans, contain few or no references to social ethics as it related to the needy poor. And in others, in general where they exist at all, allusions to the Christ-poor appear indistinguishable in terms of theological differences, even between groups that treated one another as heretics and refused to participate in one another's sacraments. This does not mean that there were *no* differences in how individual members of the various groups viewed or discriminated between the poor on the basis of their particular understanding of Christ's human and divine aspects; only that clear evidence is entirely lacking that might suggest christology as influencing such differences. The fragmentary state of many texts, and the fact that those preserved are most often unrelated to philanthropy, make clearer distinctions on this point between otherwise dissenting groups simply impossible. Nicene appropriation of formerly Arian philanthropies at Constantinople further obscures the search for any distinctly 'Arian' exegesis of the bodies of the poor whom Arian clerics most certainly, and often very generously and sacrificially, served. Indeed what is true for iconography and the Sinai icon, discussed below, is true as well for many of these texts: too often "it is impossible … to identify the portrayals of [Christ] according to theological positions."[13]

The second question—where do we find rhetoric about God and the poor in 'orthodox' fears about such heterodoxy?—leads us, on the other hand, to an abundant variety of early Christian examples. Only a small selection can be examined here.

[13] Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., "Christology: A Central Problem of Early Christian Theology and Art," in Kurt Weitzman, ed., *The Age of Spirituality: A Symposium* (New York and Princeton: Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Princeton University Press, 1980), 111.

A. *Melania the Younger and heretical communion*

In Gerontius's *Life* of Melania the Younger, we find one example of the prevalent concern with church power and 'right' liturgy as it related to doctrinal purity, a purity that might be (but was not necessarily) measured by excluding certain otherwise 'philanthropic' distributions to the needy poor. Gerontius relates how Melania:

> had such zeal for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the orthodox faith that if she heard that someone was a heretic, even in name, and advised him to make a change … [and] he was not persuaded, she would in no way accept anything from him to give for the service of the poor. *Thus* there was a certain woman of high status who ended her life … at the Holy Places. I mentioned her name in the … eucharistic offering … for it is our custom … so … they may intercede on our behalf. Since that woman in communion with us was said by some … to be a heretic … Melania was so disturbed that she said … 'If you name her [again], I will no longer be in communion with you.'[14]

In this case it is not moral impurity that taints the donor, but a reputation for being on the wrong side of orthodox doctrine, in this case the fifth-century christological debates. Melania—that large-scale powerhouse of philanthropy—here refuses to receive for distribution alms from anyone whose view of christology is apparently suspect. Yet, as Gerontius himself suggests by linguistically connecting these two anecdotes, liturgy and eucharist are here also deeply intertwined with Melania's views on 'heterodox' alms. Wrong doctrine tainted not only eucharistic liturgy, but also the λειτουργία to Christ's body in the poor. The irony here is that Melania herself was not free of heterodox taint; Elizabeth A. Clark has demonstrated Melania's 'heterodox' sympathies with Origenists, Pelagians and Donatists.[15] And Gerontius, Melania's champion, aligns her unhesitatingly with the 'rightness' of his own Monophysite views.

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[14] *The Life of Melania the Younger* (ed. and trans. Elizabeth A. Clark; Studies in Women and Religion 14; New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), chapters 27–28, pp. 46–47; my emphasis.

[15] Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, esp. 141–152, "Orthodoxy and Heresy." On Melania's Pelagian associations, see Augustine, *De gratia Christi* 1.1–2; PL 44:359–361. On the Donatist link see Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 146; Clark notes that the reference to Melania supporting 'heretics' is in the Latin, but not the Greek, *Vita*. In the Greek text there is no hint linking Melania with either heresy or schism in any form; indeed, "she is Orthodoxy personified." (146).

B. *Imperial alms for poor Donatists*

Melania was not the first to preserve her doctrinal purity at the expense of alms funds for distribution to the needy. In 347 the Western (Nicene) emperor, Constans, sent two imperial notaries, Macarius and Paulus, to resolve the Donatist controversy in North Africa. According to Optatus, anti-Donatist bishop of Milevis, they were to travel from place to place, sponsoring worship services and "exhorting individuals to unity" (3.4).[16] Under the leadership of the *comes* Macarius, "the uniform and universal worship of the one God in all the churches was enjoined on all;" those reluctant to comply were "driven into church."[17] Opponents rumored that their services contained pagan rites, but "Christian eyes saw nothing to be abhorred … the usual rite … nothing was changed in the divine sacrifices, nothing added or taken away."[18]

As part of this mission, Constans entrusted his deputies with a huge sum of money, made up of gifts for the churches and alms for the poor, to distribute to those on both sides of the schism wherever they went. Optatus claims that the emperor "did not initially send Paulus and Macarius to bring about unity, but with alms to relieve the poor, so that they might breathe, be clothed, eat and rejoice."[19] Social upheaval was rife in North Africa, with Donatists directing gangs of the Circumcellions who roamed the countryside to rob and attack, particularly destroying creditors and their records of debts. This suggests a widespread and desperate poverty and many who might have welcomed imperial alms regardless of politics.

Such a gift, paired with forced religious suppression, posed a serious threat to the Donatist church officials. Confronting Macarius and Paulus in Carthage, Donatus was furious. When the officials "told him that they were going through the several provinces and would give to those who wanted to receive, he said that he had sent letters everywhere to prevent what had been brought from being distributed anywhere to the poor."[20] Optatus defends the emperor's gift in language that appeals

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[16] Optatus, *Against the Donatists* (trans. Mark Edwards; Translated Texts for Historians; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 68; for the Latin text of the treatise, see *Traité contre les donatistes: Optat de Milève*, ed. and trans. Mireille Labrousse (SC 412, 413; Paris: Cerf, 1995–1996).

[17] Optatus *Don.* 3.8.

[18] *Don.* 3.12.

[19] *Don.* 3.3. For the Latin here see SC 413, section 8.

[20] *Don.* 3.3.

to Donatist concern for purity: "If [Constans is] an innocent man, why did you refuse to receive from the innocent? If a sinner, why did you not allow him to give, when I made the poor for his sake?"[21]

Optatus is not telling the whole truth. As both Frend and Cecconi have shown, this visit was really an imperial commission to investigate Donatus, and the use of alms would unquestionably function as a tool of patronage-propaganda to assert Nicene power.[22] Donatist bishops throughout the countryside reacted, the bishop of Bagaia going so far as to incite the Circumcellions to raise a mob to lynch the imperial messengers, who had been no less severe in punishing those who resisted unification. The ultimate fate of the alms intended for such generous unbiased distribution to the poor is lost in bitter theological polemic.

As the Donatists were eventually defeated, this story retains only the bloody Robin-Hood model of the Circumcellions as an example of Donatist philanthropy. Indeed 'Nicene' appropriation of the heterodox party often obscured the full context of the suppressed group's history of relief efforts. This confounding factor in the history of Christian philanthropy is best recognized in the case of the foundation of poorhouses and orphanages in 4th century Asia Minor. For example, the early fourth-century term πτωχοτροφεῖον, meaning a Christian almshouse or hospital that housed and cared for the poor but also traveling strangers, arises (at least as a Christian neologism) some time around the 350s, and may have taken shape under the inspiration of Eustathius of Sebaste, who was condemned at Gangra for extreme ascetic practices and also suspected by his peers of holding erroneous views on christology.[23] Yet by the fifth century the most famous πτωχοτροφεῖον is the 'orthodox' institution that Basil built at Caesarea, famous not only by its founder's large scale social mission, but also certainly thanks to the impeccable doctrinal 'purity' of Gregory of Nazianzus, who may have collected Basil's letters where it is described, and who emphasizes its magnificence in his funeral sermon for Basil.

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[21] *Don.* 3.3.

[22] W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 177–187; Giovanni A. Cecconi, "Elemosina e propaganda: Un'analisi della 'Macariana persecutio' nel III libro di Ottato di Milevi," *REAug* 36 (1990): 42–66.

[23] Basil's epistles (143, 150.3 and 176) are the oldest known texts to use the word, but Epiphanius (*Pan.* 75.1) dates it earlier and specifically to Eustathius's ministry around Pontus. For a brief overview of both ξενοδοχεῖα and πτωχοτροφεῖα and Basil's institution, see Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, 33–44.

C. *Organized philanthropy in fourth-century Constantinople*

A more complicated example, where likely 'heterodox' sources are appropriated and redacted for later use by another, more 'orthodox' group, is that of the "Great Orphanage" or ὀρφανοτροφεῖον at Constantinople. Timothy Miller's recent study of the Orphanage suggests that its legendary founder, Zotikos, "seems to have been associated with a neo-Arian or homoian party in Constantinople" sometime between 340 and 369.[24] Although the oldest known reference to Zotikos, a law of 472,[25] long postdates his presumed heterodox roots, both Socrates' and Sozomen's comments on poverty-relief efforts in the city during the mid fourth century strongly suggest Arian or neo-Arian beginnings for many institutions that later survived under 'Nicene' control.[26] Indeed it is hard to imagine how a church-led charity in Constantinople could enjoy imperial protection under either Arian emperor, Constans or Valens, unless its founders supported their christology. In the 340s, for example, a 'Macedonian'[27] deacon, Marathonius, a retired soldier, adopted asceticism, founded a monastery "at the suggestion of Eustathius of Sebaste,"[28] and used his substantial wealth to superintend "the establishments for the relief of the sick and the destitute" in Constantinople.[29] Macedonius appointed him bishop of Nicomedia and Marathonius was probably the homoian bishop in that city during at least two of the disastrous fourth-century earthquakes that felled Nicomedia, those of August 358 and October 359. Thus it is not impossible that Marathonius's philanthropic activities may have built

[24] Timothy S. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 56. See also Michel Aubineau, ed., "Zoticos de Constantinople: Nourricier des pauvres et serviteur des lépreux," *AnnBoll* 93 (1975): 67–108.

[25] *Codex Justinianus* 1.3.34(35), alluding to the ὀρφανοτροφεῖον "that Zotikos of blessed memory is said to have established" noted in Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 52.

[26] The classic study of philanthropic organizations at Constantinople remains Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (2d ed.; New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1991), esp. 113–199.

[27] The 'Macedonian' party, originally followers of the Arian/homoian bishop Macedonius, eventually agreed that "the Son is in all respects and in substance like unto the Father" (Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 4.27, *NPNF*^{2} 2:322) but continued to deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit and were substantially driven out of the city by other opponents.

[28] Sozomen. *Hist. eccl.* 4.27, *NPNF*^{2} 2:322.

[29] Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 4.27, *NPNF*^{2} 2:322. Marathonius's role as "zealous superintendent of the poor of the monastical dwellings inhabited by men and women" in *Hist. eccl.* 4.20 (*NPNF*^{2} 2:315) may suggest a combination monastery-hospice.

on those of Zotikos and equaled or even exceeded Basil of Caesarea's, with Marathonius's followers, and consequently his fame, suppressed on account of its heterodox associations. In 380, Gregory of Nazianzus lauded the Macedonian ascetics in Constantinople for their virginity, all-night psalmody, and "your love of the poor and of the brethren and of strangers,"[30] even as he scolded them for reducing the Holy Spirit to a creature. We know nothing more of Marathonius, but other texts discussed in Miller's study link Zotikos's work with a leprosarium outside the city walls, in the suburb of Elaiones, the very suburb where Arians settled and worshiped after Theodosius expelled them from the city. As a further hint, one of the charges against John Chrysostom was that he "built a leprosarium *within* the … residential district of Constantinople,"[31] perhaps credible to Nicenes competing with Arian philanthropy outside the walls. These comments suggest competitive philanthropic activities, but the early interplay of heterodox and 'Nicene' influence is lost in the press of later administrations.

D. *Leo's Roman 'Collections'*

The power over 'heresies' as it was exercised in the guise of philanthropy is also evident in Leo the Great's fifth-century *De Collectis* or "Collection Sermons" concerning an annual freewill collection that was gathered during the fasts of Lent and December, "from the resources of many to take care of needed expenses at the discretion of administrators."[32] Following a quotation from 2 Corinthians 9:7, Leo writes, "Let all those who come to the aid of the poor realize that they are actually spending this donation on God."[33] Again, in speaking of those who are too ashamed to publically beg, he says, "Rightly indeed do we see the person of our Lord Jesus Christ in the poor and needy."[34] Yet he also assumes Christ as the Philanthropist who rewards those who practice

[30] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 41.8; ET *NPNF*^{2} 7:382; = PG 36:440.

[31] My emphasis; for discussion see Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 61, citing the *Vita* or Discourse by Martyrius of Antioch [= *BHG* 871] and comments in Florent van Ommeslaeghe, "Que vaut le témoignage de Pallade sur le Procès de Saint Jean Chrysostom?" *AnnBoll* 95 (1977): 389–414, esp. 393.

[32] Leo, *Sermon* 11.2, English trans. Jane Patricia Freeland and Agnes Josephine Conway (eds. and trans.), *St. Leo the Great: Sermons* (FC 93; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 48.

[33] Leo, *Serm.* 11.2.1.

[34] Leo, *Serm.* 9.3.2.

alms: "Christ our Lord wants us to care about the poor so that, on the day when payment will be portioned out, he might lavish upon the 'merciful' the 'mercy' that he has promised,"[35] drawing on the Matthew parable to argue alms as a key criteria for salvation or judgement.[36] For Leo, the value of alms did not depend on the recipients expressing gratitude to, or prayers for, their donors, although they might: "'The alms themselves will pray for you' as well as those who receive assistance . . .[37] No human being should be considered worthless by another. That nature which the creator of the universe made his own should not be looked down upon in anyone."[38]

Yet at least one collection sermon is coupled with instructions for specific action against perceived heretics. In Sermon 9, dated November 443, Leo develops the judgement imagery of Matthew 25 at length. Arguing that pagans were ministering to demons, Leo teaches that "the most holy sacrificial offering of our 'alms' [sh]ould be practiced in order to counter those ungodly victims,"[39] by which he means heretics whom he calls Manichaeans. With this image in mind, he gives orders that suggest nothing less than a heresy hunt in the guise of collecting alms for the poor:

> We encourage you to take up as well the following effort. Expose to your priests any Manichaeans—wherever they might be hiding. . . . They deny the birth of Christ according to the flesh. They say that his Passion and Resurrection were merely appearances and not reality. They strip from the Baptism of regeneration any power of grace whatsoever. . . . It is fitting that the palm of this work [i.e., exposing these heretics] should be joined to the 'sacrifice of alms.'[40]

It is not clear if Leo here has in mind self-identified 'Manichaeans' or merely persons who were perceived (by his parishioners) as denying the physical materiality of Christ's birth, passion and resurrection. The reader guesses that these suspected 'heretics' were likely named to the priests when congregants brought their alms to church. Of interest to the present discussion is that both tasks concern Christ's 'body': Leo's flock is to provide materially for the material Christ-poor while report-

[35] Leo, *Serm.* 8.2.
[36] Leo, *Serm.* 10.2.
[37] Leo, *Serm.* 10.3.
[38] Leo, *Serm.* 9.2.
[39] Leo, *Serm.* 9.3.1.
[40] Leo, *Serm.* 9.4.

ing those who believed that Christ, at least as regards the liturgy, was immaterial. Alms thus functioned here to maintain a very intentional and specific affirmation of christology even as they served to assert the ecclesial power of 'right' doctrine.

E. *The story of the paralyzed Aphthartodocetic*

The most worthy purpose for unmasking heretics, according to early Christian texts, was, if possible, to assist them to achieve salvation. One story of such a redemption relating to christology and the philanthropy of free healthcare is the story of a young man named Julian in Sophronius of Jerusalem's seventh-century *Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*.[41]

Sophronius's overt theological agenda in relating the healing miracles of this Egyptian shrine has been well-recognized.[42] In *Miracle* 12, he recounts the story of Julian, originally a wealthy young man who had been corrupted by both his own lusts and his allegiance to the aphthartodocetic heresy of Julian of Halicarnassus. This heresy purportedly taught that Christ's body was incorruptible before the resurrection. When Sophronius's young adherent to this sect reached the age for contracting an honorable marriage he renounced his mistress, who poisoned him out of vengeance, causing a partial but devastating paralysis. When the paralysis did not respond to standard medical treatments, his parents brought him to the healing sanctuary of Ss. Cyrus and John, martyrs in the Diocletian persecution with whose relics, as tradition

[41] For the critical edition, see Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: Contribucion al estudio de la* Incubatio *Cristiana* (Consejo superior de Investigaciones cientificas, manuales y anejos de emerita 31; Madrid: Instituo 'Antonio de Nebrija' 1975), 243–400. The best translation is presently that of Jean Gascou, trans., *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des Saints Cyr et Jean* (*BHG* I 477–479; Collections de l'université Marc-Bloch-Strasbourg; Paris: De Boccard, 2006). For further discussion of rich and poor in this text see Susan R. Holman, "Rich and Poor in Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*," in Holman, ed., *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 103–124.

[42] As John Duffy has observed, Sophronius is intent "to extol the God-given powers of Cyrus and John (with liberal portions of orthodox propaganda included for good measure)."; "Observations on Sophronius' *Miracles of Cyrus and John*," *JTS* n.s. 35 (1984): 73. Christoph von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (ThH 20; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 105, notes that in this treatise Sophronius expresses not only the passionate doctrinal concerns he shows in his other works but also the concern common in most patristic texts "de l'unité entre la vraie doctrine et la sainteté."

had it, Cyril of Alexandria had 'Christianized' a pagan healing sanctuary in the fifth century.[43]

The saints, as Julian might have expected, visited him in nightly diagnostic and prescriptive sessions while he slept. However, their prescription for his cure required that he renounce his heresy and embrace the Catholic church. His persistent refusal hindered any hopes for physical healing. After many nights of prolonged theological discussion with the saints, Julian finally agreed, but only if he might keep his change of beliefs a secret from his former co-religionists who, as it happened, shared the same sanctuary as the orthodox and so might see him there. Allowing him to believe that they would permit such a subterfuge, the saints practiced a trick of their own that forced him into making a public confession of his now orthodox christology and this, almost incidentally, effected his cure: "the healing of the body coincided with the conversion of the soul".[44]

While Julian was not from a poor family he was, by the time he reached the healing shrine, physically helpless and dependent on the charity of others, a beggar at the saints' mercy. His healing story is an ironic example of how orthodox responses to heterodox christology merged with practical responses to poverty relief in this text. The healing of his own 'corruption' depended entirely on his public witness to affirm the doctrine of the mutability of Christ's own body. Orthodoxy and christology here effect power in and through the body of a needy beggar.

The texts discussed above illustrate how some early Christians in late antiquity expressed tensions over heterodox christology and the view that wrong belief somehow 'tainted' the body in need. These allusions may also remind us of other early Christian texts where donors' unjust business practices or presumed sexual immorality were similarly charged with contaminating philanthropic donations.[45] Purity of life as

[43] This attribution is suspect; Jean Gascou now argues that the cult was founded later than Cyril, probably under the patronage of the Monastery of the Metanoia at Canopis and that the mythic attribution to Cyril—thus affiliating the cult with his infamously zealous concern for orthodoxy—was one effectively constructed by Sophronius. See Jean Gascou, "Les origines du culte des saints Cyr et Jean," *AnnBoll* 125 (2007): 241–281.

[44] ἡ δὲ ῥῶσις τοῦ σώματος τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς μεταθέσει συνέτρεχεν. *Mir. Ss Cyr. et Joh.* 12.18.

[45] For example, *Acts of Peter* 30.1 (the sexual immorality of the generous donor, Chryse) and Chapter 18 of the *Didascalia*, "That it is not right to receive gifts of alms from reprehensible persons." This is part of an extensive discussion of 'pure' alms;

well as of doctrinal beliefs were necessary, these texts suggest, in order to effect the most truly Christlike philanthropy. Indeed, heterodoxy and immorality are commonly conflated in many religious traditions, belief and action regarded as two pieces of a unified whole. In such texts of early Christianity, God is said to work in the poor to compel the philanthropic participants to a right christology, however that may be understood within a particular community.

Christ 'Philanthropist' and the Last Judgement: The Subsumed Poor

In certain texts about the last judgement—texts clearly based on a view of God that draws on Matthew 25 imagery—the bodies of the needy poor themselves seem to disappear entirely, subsumed into the dominant figure of Christ within this judgement scene. The following discussion considers two such examples, one text and one image. These two demonstrate how the common theme of God 'in' the poor in early Christian texts pushed readers—and viewers—beyond gazing at destitute bodies in the street, to turn their spiritual gaze instead to the eschatological encounter with the embodied Christ Himself in the godhead at the day of judgement. This is seen, for example, in Gregory of Nyssa's two sermons "On the Love of the Poor" and in the famous sixth-century Sinai icon of Christ.

A. *Gregory of Nyssa on the last judgement*

Gregory of Nyssa vividly equates the needy poor with the image of Christ in his two sermons "On the love of the poor." And he says more than Gregory of Nazianzus did in *Oration* 14 in emphasizing imagery of the last judgement. Preaching on the vision of Matthew 25 as if it is a scene in which he has personally participated, Nyssen writes in his first homily, "I have seen the Son of Man descend from the sky … I heard that those in the camp on the left were called 'goats'… I listened to their answers." And he launches into the second homily by returning again directly to this same image:

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for text see *Didascalia Apostolorum*, (trans. R. Hugh Connolly; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 132–160 (chapters 14–18).

> Again I hold before my eyes the dreadful vision … I saw there all the races … this image impresses my soul with such fear that it seems to be coming to life … This threat continues to terrify me … How to elude this threat? By choosing the way … indicated in Scripture, … 'I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was a stranger, naked, sick, a prisoner. That which you have done to one single person, it is to me to whom you have done it.'[46]

As he uses this text to transition the sermon into practical advice for his audience, Gregory describes the rotting, sick flesh of the poor out in the street in terms of Christ's image: "Do not despise those who are stretched out on the ground as if they merit no respect. Consider who they are … they bear the countenance (πρόσωπον) of our Saviour…[47] the Scripture tells us this account … to teach us the grace and value of beneficence."[48] In his terms identifying the poor with Christ, Gregory emphasizes for his audience the acute awareness that the one concept is carrying the image of the other. The needy bear the πρόσωπον of Christ, and yet they are discretely distinct (indeed, fellow) humans who have been imbued with a special spiritual identity and value to God. He repeats this emphasis in his second sermon, describing those he calls lepers: "What does [Matt 25:40] teach us? That God's blessing follows from obeying his commandments…. Let us throw ourselves with zeal into the path of God … blessed by the Lord who holds himself bound to the attentions that we render to the needy."[49] In comparing the lepers with, and distinguishing them from, Christ's incarnation, he evokes the humanness of need:

> "The Lord of the angels … became man for you and put on this stinking and unclean flesh, with the soul thus enclosed, to effect a total

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[46] Gregory of Nyssa, *De pauperibus amandis* 1 (PG 46:460–461) and *De pauperibus amandis* 2 (PG 46:472–473), my emphases; the critical edition of both sermons that of A. van Heck, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* [= *GNO*] (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 9.1:91–108 (*Paup.* 1) and 9.1:109–127 (*Paup.* 2); translation here follows Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 193–206, selections. While I there suggested the audience might be familiar with a wall painting of this scene, it now seems to me that Gregory's consistent use of the first person more likely suggests something invisible to the audience's perception, possibly Gregory's personal dream, vision, imagining, or even a simple rhetorical flourish. Were a wall painting at hand, one would expect him to use the vocative or second person, appealing to the audience to look for themselves, but he does not do this. He does point to the visual images of the living, rotting flesh of the sick poor in the streets, corners, and alleys of the city.

[47] *Paup.* 1, *GNO* 9.1:98.

[48] *Paup.* 1, *GNO* 9.1:100.

[49] *Paup.* 2, *GNO* 9.1:113.

> cure of your ills by his touch. But you, who share the nature of this brokenness, you flee your own race.... Remember ... you contemplate ... a human person like yourself, whose basic nature is no different from your own."[50]

In this text, Gregory offers the important nuance that would encourage his congregation to look upon the poor 'as' Christ and yet—and also—look beyond this analogy, ultimately, to the voice and body of God who stands, on judgement day, at the intersection between sheep and goats. Once donors treat the poor as they would treat the literal body of an equally needy Christ, the donors may simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, engage with one particular divine aspect of God that is central to this dynamic: the aspect and role of Christ as philanthropist. And in this image it seems, at least in the eschaton, the bodies of the poor themselves effectively disappear.

B. *The Sinai icon of Christ*

This disappearance is most obviously evident in the history of Christian art, where the extant examples that remain to us of last judgement scenes consistently fail to depict any hints of the destitute poor.[51] One example of this from the same period of late antiquity as the texts discussed here is the famous Sinai icon of Christ (Fig. 1). This icon, which contains clear allusions to the Matthew 25:31–46 story, is rarely discussed in the context of poverty relief and early Christian philanthropy; most studies focus on the central figure of Christ to the exclusion of other details. This is understandable given the centrality of this image in art and Christian history, as well as the fact that the entire original background image had been covered with green paint until 1962. Yet both context and background suggest several enticing philanthropic and exegetical hints.

The figure itself provides the first hint. Just as the Matthew parable distinguishes a moral difference between those placed on the 'right' or 'left' of the heavenly 'judge,' so the Sinai icon is best known for its polarities of a paradoxical fixed dynamism and simultaneous expression

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[50] *Paup.* 2, *GNO* 9.1:115.

[51] For this observation I thank Nancy Ševčenko. For further discussion of last judgement scenes in early Christian art, see her chapter, "Some Images of the Second Coming and the Fate of the Soul in Middle Byzantine Art," in *Apocalyptic Themes in Early Church and Society*, (ed. Robert Daly, S.J.; Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History 2; Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, forthcoming).

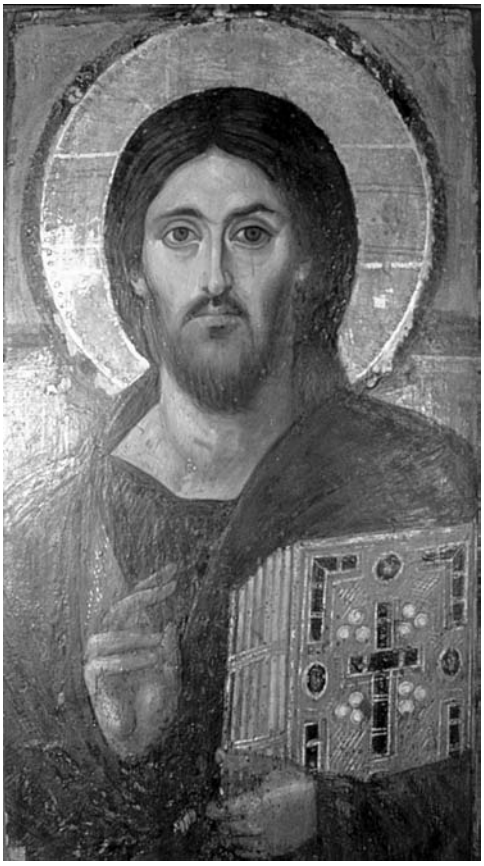

Fig. 1. Christ Pantocrator, 6th century (encaustic on panel). Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt / Bridgeman Art Library. Used with permission.

of human/divine achieved artistically through the marked asymmetry of the left and right sides of Christ's face and body. In his classic study soon after the icon was restored,[52] Manolis Chatzidakis described the artistic techniques by which these qualities were achieved:

> The two great eyes are not … identical—either in dimension or shape … each acquires a slightly different nuance of expression: the right eye is more calm, while the left, larger, is more lively … [this] deviation from symmetry creates an almost imperceptible animation, reflecting

[52] Manolis Chatzidakis, "An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai," *The Art Bulletin* 49 (1967): 197–208.

> an intense interior existence.... The body reinforces the sensation that the Christ is turned to his right ... however ... retain[ing] as much frontality as possible.[53]

Chatzidakis suggests that the image expresses the same christology found in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite writing at the same period: "He remains in every movement unchanged and immobile, and though He is in perpetual motion, he revolves around himself."[54] Kurt Weitzmann similarly describes the asymmetry of the image as "striking a harmony between the divine and the human nature of Christ."[55]

Chatzidakis dates the icon to the mid-sixth century on the basis of an identical facial asymmetry found in the mosaic head of St. Peter in the apse of SS. Cosmas and Damian in Rome, a mosaic firmly dated to shortly after 530. If this is correct, the bodily asymmetry is not in itself a symbol uniquely limited to expressing christology; indeed, classical medicine presumed an asymmetry between left and right sides of the body. The judgement scene of Matthew 25 would appear to draw on this common cultural assumption, the right side being positive and salvific, the left side dark, shadowy, and laden with nuances of destruction, 'natural science' making such a judgement scene readily understandable. Although art studies of the Sinai Christ icon do not explicitly associate the image with the two 'sides' of the judge in the philanthropy moral of Matthew 25, nor with the last judgement, others do see such an association.[56] Further hints of this exegetical relationship are found, I suggest, in the historical context in which the icon was first painted, as well as the background details in the painting itself.

Chatzidakis suggests that the icon was created in Constantinople and may have come to Sinai at the same time as Justinian's patronage

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[53] Chatzidakis, "An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai," 199–200.

[54] Chatzidakis, "An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai," 200, citing PG 3:937.

[55] Kurt Weitzmann, "The Arts" in John Galey, ed., *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), 92.

[56] Gary Vikan, for example, notes, "The right side of Christ's face (our left) is open, receptive, and welcoming, whereas his left side—Byzantium's traditional side of judgement and condemnation—is harsh and threatening, the eyebrow arched, the cheekbone accentuated by shadow, and the mouth drawn down as if in a sneer. Christ's judgement, whether comfort or condemnation, is here literally created in the eye and conscience of the beholder." (Vikan, "Sacred Image, Sacred Power," in *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium* [Burlington, Vt: Ashgate Variorum, 2003], 4). Protestant lay artist, the late Linette Martin, reflected both the influence of art historians and Orthodox thought when she saw Matt 25:31–46 as "especially evident in the sixth-century wax icon from St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai"; *Sacred Doorways: A Beginner's Guide to Icons* (Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press, 2002), 140–141.

first funded the construction of the monastery and church. This is the same period that witnessed an abundance of philanthropic initiatives in Constantinople and beyond. Thus the creation of the icon dates to a place and era in which imperial philanthropy was closely related to the ideal of Christ-philanthropist.[57]

The first little-known detail, probably added later, is an inscription that clearly attests to an interpretive use of the icon as imaging "Christ the Philanthropist."[58] Once the 1962 restoration removed the green paint, the background revealed

> Architecture … [that] represents in summary fashion a building with ornamental windows terminating in a cornice surmounted by a golden volute. In the center an exedra recedes in perspective. Above the building, a blue-green zone probably indicates the horizon, while the rest, clear grey-blue, would represent the firmament indicated by two large golden stars … the remains of the cinnabar-red letters IC XC ο φΙΛ (άνθρω)Π(ος) were left on the architectural background revealed by cleaning. The lines and letters are probably traces of a late Byzantine restoration.[59]

While this inscription may be late, the fact that it may reflect a fundamental identification of the icon with the philanthropy imagery of Matthew 25 may be supported by two remaining, barely-visible, details: the figures of two animals lying on the building facades behind Christ's right and left shoulder (Fig. 2A and 2B). These figures are clearly part of

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[57] Emphasized in Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*.

[58] For another, modern, hint at this exegetical context, this very icon (or most probably a replica) appears affixed to the wall over the doorway inside the bakery room at Sinai, the very place in which bread is prepared daily for the monastery and for its Bedouin workers and visitors; for this see Helen C. Evans and Bruce White, *Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt: A Photographic Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press in collaboration with the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and collaboration with St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 2004), 65. The editors sum up this icon as conveying "the compassion of Christ's humanity as well as the authority of his divinity" (64).

[59] Chatzidakis, "An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai," 198, 197. For other brief studies on this famous icon see e.g., George Galivaris, "Early Icons," in Konstantinos A. Manafis, ed., *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1990), 93; Kurt Weitzmann, "Loca Sancta and the Representational Art of Palestine," *DOP* 28 (1974): 34–35; and the museum entry description by Susan A. Boyd in Kurt Weitmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Centuries, Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977 through February 12, 1978* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Princeton University Press, 1979), museum entry no. 473 discussed on pp. 527–528. For a note on the icon's history in Kiev, see Heinz Skrobucha, *Sinai* (trans. Geoffrey Hunt; New York: Oxford University Press 1966), 107.

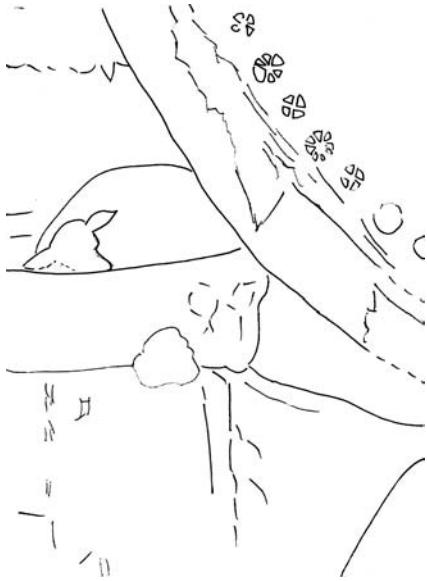

Fig. 2A. Reclining animal (?sheep) on pediment behind Christ's right shoulder in the 6th century icon of Christ at Sinai. Ink-sketch by the author, based on a photograph by Bruce M. White in: Helen C. Evans, His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, Bruce M. White, *Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt: A Photographic Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 65 (detail).

the original painting. They have not (to my knowledge) been discussed elsewhere. The figures are small and difficult to distinguish in most printed images of the icon, but quite clearly visible in Bruce White's recently published photo of the icon.[60]

Pending more definitive discussion by an art historian, I suggest that the animal behind Christ's right shoulder (the left half of the image) appears to denote a reclining sheep, its dark head resting, chin-down, on the flat building, black ears flapping out to either side, its hefty, cream-colored body relaxed behind it.[61] On the other side, behind

[60] Evans et al., *Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt: A Photographic Essay*, 65.

[61] On high-density close-up scan this figure also seems to me to reveal the white sliver of its eye, although this is less clear. Another sixth-century sheep image also at Sinai, not directly comparable but having similar head-to-body proportions, is the standing 'lamb of God' in the medallion above the Transfiguration mosaic in the apse of the Sinai sanctuary. For a detailed image of that sheep, see John Galey, *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), fig. 123 [figure pages unnumbered but = p. 129].

Figure 2B. Reclining animal (?camel or ?goat) on pediment behind Christ's left shoulder in the 6th century icon of Christ at Sinai. Ink-sketch by the author, based on a photograph by Bruce M. White in: Helen C. Evans, His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, Bruce M. White, *Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt: A Photographic Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 65 (detail).

Christ's left shoulder (in the right half of the icon), a brown snout and large, malevolent eye is more easily seen. Here the species is unclear but the possible presence of a hump may suggest a camel rather than a goat. While exact identification of this pair remains debatable, the very presence of these animal shapes on the right and left sides of the city landscape behind Christ, and the fact that the animal on the right (where Christ's raises his hand in blessing) may most closely resemble a sheep, strongly suggests an intentional allusion to Matthew 25, with a focus on Christ as philanthropist/judge. As with most visual representations of the judgement scene from Matthew 25, the poor do not appear in this image.[62]

In summary, this 'Christ-philanthropist' model, while alluding to Matthew 25:31–46, contains no images of the poor themselves. The central focus, instead, invites meditation on the model of Christ the

[62] See above, n. 51.

philanthropist rather than viewing Christ 'in' the externalized poor. Ascetics who adopted voluntary poverty, for example, usually began their ascetic life with a singularly spectacular burst of philanthropy, not primarily for the sake of the needy recipients who benefitted by their divestments, but rather as a means of either 'obeying' Christ's teachings (well known, for example, in the conversion story of St. Antony) or explicitly seeking to follow the model of Christ himself. As one example, the *Life* of John the Almsgiver begins, "John, the great servant of God and his faithful high priest, who was named after 'almsgiving'… from his exceeding goodness which took Christ as its model."[63] The Sinai icon would seem to point to both a call to such obedience in light of the last judgement and a reminder of Christ as model philanthropist. The later cinnabar inscription may point to an explicit interpretation of this suggested original emphasis or perhaps to a later need for such an emphasis within the Sinai community.

Conclusion

In his 1936 study on "God in Patristic Thought,"[64] G.L. Prestige, reflecting patristic scholarship of his time, considered the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation by focusing on theological terms to the exclusion of social and material culture. Thus, reasonably enough, he had little to say about how christology influenced views on early Christian philanthropy and teachings about the poor. His brief discussion of Divine Providence and οἰκονομία notes little more than, "God is revealed in his works."[65] In this study I have likewise followed leading concerns of present-day patristic scholarship—social history and 'heresy' rhetoric—to explore early Christian language about philanthropy, with a particular focus on the challenge of social rhetoric about 'heterodox' christology and the patristic use of Matthew 25:31–46 as a key Gospel text for most references to the Christian doctrine of how the divine presence relates to the human needy.

One question that such a study raises, inviting further scholarship, is that of the nuances between the relationship of Christ's role in

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[63] Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, eds., *Three Byzantine Saints* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), 199.

[64] G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: Heinemann, 1936).

[65] Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 57.

and with the poor, and liturgical christology. Indeed, a sacramental view of engagement with the poor—*as* an integrally liturgical act—is a theme that invites dialogue in contemporary orthodoxy. The Greek Orthodox priest, Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis, recently illustrated this in a reflection on orthodoxy and social witness:

> In Christian tradition we have three distinct but equally important and inseparable sacramental ways of being in communion in God: the Word of God, the Divine Liturgy, and the mystery of the poor brethren. These three ways of communicating with God through the work of the Holy Spirit in their inseparable unity shape the ethos of the Christian church. Whenever one of these constitutive aspects of the Christian ethos is not adequately acknowledged and emphasized in its importance, the life and witness of the Christian Church suffers.[66]

The early Christian view of God as it related to conceptual rhetoric about the poor and tensions over 'heterodoxy' continues to raise critical issues in Christian ethics today. For example, many Christian relief funds retain a confessional specificity, earmarked for administration by a particular confessional group even when they serve those in need regardless of religion. Concerns for 'orthodoxy' and 'right liturgy' in philanthropy often become major sources of financial squabbles in the tensions that follow theological divisions, and modern power struggles over money in missions may not be far removed from the image of Donatist North Africa in 347. Such practices seem to proceed from an assumption that effective philanthropy depends on 'effecting truth' and is possible only from one's preferred ideological association. Whether or not one shares this view, it is hoped that this brief look at similar variants in early Christian poverty rhetoric might encourage ongoing dialogue about contemporary philanthropy and the God-given significance of the poor, while remaining mindful, in social justice issues, of their full humanity.

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[66] Emmanuel Clapsis, "Wealth and Poverty in Christian Tradition," Paper presented at Orthodox Diakonia: International Conference on the Social Witness and Service of the Orthodox Churches, 30 April–5 May 2004, Valamo Lay Academy, Finland, 10. Cited 13 November 2004. Online: http://www.iocc.org/orthodoxdiakonia/content/revclapsis.pdf.

THE PERSONS IN GOD AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN PATRISTIC THEOLOGY: AN ARGUMENT FOR PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT*

Brian E. Daley, S.J.**

It has become commonplace, in recent years, for theologians to argue that all serious Christian reflection must be, in some way or other, rooted in our understanding that God is a Trinity. Our sense of the Church, for instance, as a communion of persons gathered into one by the Holy Spirit around the Eucharistic table, worshipping the God of Mystery as our Father, at the invitation of Jesus our Savior and brother, reveals and deepens our long-held conviction that God is, at the very core of the divine identity, a communion of what we also call—for lack of a better term—"persons." John Zizioulas has argued that even our modern notion of the person itself, which he identifies with "being" at its most intense and authentic level, is revealed in the triune reality of God to be essentially communitarian, relational, ecclesial, eucharistic, since God's own being is eternally constituted as "personal" by the dynamic mutual relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[1]

Similarly, it has become a theological commonplace to recognize that our awareness of God's triune mode and structure of being is itself rooted in our historical experience of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the single person in whom God's long history of self-revelation and gracious involvement with humanity has reached its universally significant climax. Pope John Paul II, in the apostolic letter announcing his program for the millennial celebrations of 2000, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, first called the Church's attention to the significance of

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* A longer version of this article appeared in *Pro Ecclesia* (15 [2006]). The ideas put forward here evolved over many years, and were formed and tested especially in many conversations with Lloyd Patterson, my mentor, colleague, and dear friend, when both of us were teaching in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I am happy to dedicate it to Lloyd's memory.

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[1] See *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985), especially Chapter One, "Personhood and Being."

this "Great Jubilee" commemorating the Incarnation of the Son of God in time, and then remarked, as he turned to the details of his plan: "the thematic structure of this three-year period, centered on Christ, the Son of God made human, must necessarily be theological, and therefore Trinitarian."[2] "Necessarily theological," presumably, because all reflection on the historical career of Jesus must lead the Christian to a confession of the divine Mystery, which Jesus, as Son of the Father and giver of the Spirit, reveals in word and action; and "necessarily Trinitarian," at the same time, because this God whom Jesus has revealed in his whole human history two millennia ago is precisely the single God we call, by a kind of emblematic shorthand, the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit. The now-famous axiom from which Karl Rahner developed his own outline of a Christian understanding of God simply affirms this mutual dependence of our understanding of God acting in history and our mental image of God as he is in himself: "The 'economic' Trinity *is* the 'immanent' Trinity, and vice versa … The doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of God's saving plan cannot be adequately distinguished from one another."[3]

In the early centuries of Christian reflection on the Gospel, this paradoxical way of conceiving the divine reality, as one yet three, developed concurrently—by a process of curiously intricate mutual influence—with a growing understanding of the personal ontology of Jesus. The confession of both the triune God and the single person of Jesus, God and man, rests on the recognition that Jesus is the divine Savior, sent into the world to free humanity from the destructive burden of sin and fear; that he must himself be truly divine in order to give our humanity a new beginning; yet that he must also be truly one of us, share our human life and choices, and even our human death, if he is to touch us effectively from within, to heal our humanity from its historic ills.

So Ignatius of Antioch, at the start of the second century, speaks constantly of the risen Jesus as "our God,"[4] yet insists with equal warmth that his flesh and blood, his human birth and his human

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[2] *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 39.

[3] "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," *Mysterium Salutis* 2 (Einsiedeln/Cologne: Benziger, 1967), 328–329.

[4] E.g., *Eph.* Inscr.; *Eph.* 18.2; *Trall.* 7.1; *Rom.* inscr.

suffering and death, were real, and that he remains "in the flesh" even after his resurrection.[5]

> "There is only one physician," he writes to the Ephesians, "of flesh yet spiritual, born yet unbegotten, God incarnate, genuine life in the midst of death, sprung from Mary as well as God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it—Jesus Christ our Lord."[6]

Through the course of the next five centuries, amid struggles to understand this set of paradoxes more richly and to affirm them without lessening their power, representatives of the Christian "mainstream" came to be convinced more and more that the mystery of redemption, worked by God's self-disclosure in time, is itself the mystery of the person of Christ, understood in all its universal significance. So Maximus Confessor, commenting on Paul's assertion that "the end of the ages has come upon us," (1 Cor 10:11), sums up the divine plan, or "economy," in the following way:

> That plan (οἰκονομία) was that he [the creator], without undergoing change, should be contained by human nature through true hypostatic union, and should, without alteration, join human nature to himself, so that he would become a human being, in a way known only to him, and should make the human person divine through union with himself.[7]

My argument here is that there is, throughout the development of early Christian theology, a much closer connection than modern historians of theology normally suspect between the development of the classically Trinitarian understanding of God—as a single infinite reality or "substance" which *is* three mutually related, eternally self-giving "poles of energy," three concrete individual things or *hypostases*, which the Latin tradition came to call three "persons"[8] and the development of the classical shape of Christology, by which we confess Jesus Christ to be a single "pole of energy" or hypostasis or person, a single divine subject or agent, who *is* at once fully God in "substance" and fully human in "substance," without causing those human and divine realities to be either confused with each other or distanced from each

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[5] E.g., *Smyrn.* 1.1–3.1.

[6] *Eph.* 7.2.

[7] *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 22.

[8] For a careful and informative account of the development of the language of *hypostasis* and *prosopon* or *persona* in the Latin and Greek Fathers, see especially André de Halleux, "'Hypostase' et 'Personne' dans la formation du dogme trinitaire (ca. 375–381)," *RHE* 79 (1984): 313–369, 625–670.

other. Gregory of Nazianzus' famous formulation of this conceptual reciprocity between theology in the strict sense (that is, reflection on the divine reality) and Christology, in his *First Letter to Cledonius*, puts this mutual relationship between Trinitarian and Christological language with admirable, if almost untranslatable, simplicity:

> If we must speak concisely, the elements from which the Savior has come to be are one thing and another (ἄλλο μὲν καὶ ἄλλο)—if indeed the visible and the invisible are not the same thing, nor the timeless and the temporal—but not one subject and another (ἄλλος δὲ καὶ ἄλλος)—no way! For both are one by combination (συγκράσει), with God becoming human or a human being becoming God, or however one might express it. But I say "one thing and another," the opposite of what is true of the Trinity. For there we speak of "one subject and another" (ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος), lest we confuse the individuals (ὑποστάσεις), but not of "one thing and another," for the three are one and the same in divinity.[9]

My conviction is that this sense Gregory articulates of the intrinsic connection between a Trinitarian understanding of the divine Mystery and a balanced but unified conception of the person of Christ, the single Son of God who is at once truly human and truly divine, is, in fact, implicitly present in the growth of Christian theology from at least the second century—long before adequate terminology was available to give the connection words[10]—and that the development of the one classical scheme in theological language inevitably promoted, conditioned and even determined the development of the other.[11] More particularly, I believe one can see a kind of implied equation at work in the growth of early Christian understanding of the Mysteries of God and of Christ. If one eliminates the extremes that most serious Christian thinkers, from Ignatius on, quickly recognized as absurd—for instance, the notion that God ceases to be God in "emptying himself" to save

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[9] *Ep.* 101.20–21 (SC 208:44–46).

[10] For helpful reflections on the process of growth in dogmatic terminology and in the "differentiated consciousness" of the Church's continuing faith, see Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *De Deo Trino I. Pars Dogmatica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964), 17–28; 98–112 (trans. Conn O'Donovan, *The Way to Nicaea. The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976] 1–17; 118–137).

[11] This same connection has been argued for, more tentatively but at much greater length, by Basil Studer in *Trinity and Incarnation*. For a careful and suggestive study of the connection between the language of "unconfused union" in Patristic debates on the Trinity and that of Christological reflection, see Luise Abramowski, "Συνάφεια und ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις als Bezeichnungen für trinitarische und christologische Einheit," *Drei christologische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981), 62–109.

humanity, or the idea that that Jesus' bodily appearance was merely a phantom—then one notices an emergent pattern in the early Christian conceptions of both God and Jesus. The more ancient authors emphasize the complex personal *unity* of Christ as the agent of salvation, the more they are forced to acknowledge the irreducible *threeness* of God, even to the point of having to conceive of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as in some way ontologically ranked or subordinated personal "units," as sharing in the divine reality in differing degrees of fullness. Conversely, the more ancient authors emphasize the radical *unity* of the divine Mystery, and see the threeness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in what we might call perspectival rather than ontological terms, as a threeness of manifestation in history, corresponding to a threefold human experience of the Divine—the more, in other words, they express the Christian sense of God in a "modalist" rather than a trinitarian direction—the more they are forced to see Jesus, the Savior, as ontologically and subjectively *double*, and to understand his saving role in terms of God's dwelling in a human being or acting in ways parallel to his human actions, rather than in terms of God's personal identity with him. To put it more concisely: one can see in the ancient debates, I believe, that a theology which emphasizes the threeness of persons in God—even a theology that is to some degree "subordinationist" in conceiving how those three can still be one—tends to stress the oneness of person in Christ the Savior, occasionally even to the point of seeming to compromise the fullness of his humanity in order to preserve that oneness. On the other hand, a theology with a weak conception of the distinction of persons in God—a theology with a more "modalist" way of conceiving God's being—tends to stress the twoness of natures or substances in Christ, even to the point of tending to see him as a human person in whom the Word or Wisdom or Spirit of God has come to dwell, as a divine gift extrinsic to himself.

In general, Greek theologians through at least the sixth century tended to be more concerned about the dangers of modalism—usually under the pejorative label of "Sabellianism"—than they were about subordinationism or even tritheism. The reason, I suggest, was that they instinctively saw that a thorough-going modalism in one's understanding of the God of Biblical history implies reducing Jesus to being simply an inspired and inspiring human person, a Spirit-filled teacher and healer who is really no different in his ontological makeup from the other prophets and saints. The dominant theology in the Latin West, on the other hand, up to the sixth century—joined in the decades after

Nicaea by Athanasius and his intellectual followers[12]—tended more to emphasize the transcendence, uniqueness and singleness of the divine Mystery, and at the same time to give greater emphasis to the distinction and balance, even the relative autonomy, of human and divine in Jesus. Behind all traditions, East and West, lay the real issue of both Trinitarian theology and Christology: how can we understand God as radically one and eternally transcendent with respect to creation, and still understand Jesus as a genuinely divine savior, who genuinely acts in our history as a human being like ourselves?

To evaluate the validity of the scheme proposed here, one needs to move beyond abstraction and to look more deeply into the arguments proposed by a variety of authors in the ancient controversies over God and Christ. What I would like to do here is simply to offer three test-cases, in snapshot fashion, from ancient theological debates in which Christological concerns seem to play a determining role in Trinitarian argument, or vice versa. Even though we can only sketch out the details, I hope this may be enough to give a certain plausibility to the hypothesis I am proposing, and to stimulate further reflection on the degree to which it holds good.

1. The first test case to consider is that of the so-called "monarchian controversy" of the late second and early third centuries. At the end of the fifth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius of Caesaraea gives several lengthy citations from an anonymous work apparently written early in the third century—known sometimes as "The Little Labyrinth"—which tells of the doctrinal innovations of a number of Roman Christians who had recently been condemned by Popes Victor (189–199) and Zephyrinus (199–217).[13] According to Eusebius' source, these errant Christians were above all concerned to emphasize the radical oneness, the *monarchia*, of the divine power at work in the universe.

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[12] See the thoughtful warnings against the standard, oversimplified typology of "Eastern" and "Western" approaches to the unity of substance and Trinity of persons in God, articulated in the 1890s by Théodore de Régnon, in Michel R. Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *TS* 56 (1995): 237–250; cf. *idem*, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, eds., *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998) 47–67, esp. 61–62. For distinct but largely complementary new attempts to reconceive the entire narrative of fourth-century theological controversy, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (2 vols; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 2004).

[13] *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.

Their principal deviation from the tradition of Christian faith, as it had developed by then, is said in the document to be their suggestion that since God is simple in being, Jesus was "simply a human being" (ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος), a position that they reportedly reinforced by using their own corrected version of Scripture in combination with Aristotelian dialectics. A heresiological work ascribed to Tertullian—which may in fact come from Pope Zephyrinus' chancery—adds the detail that some of these Christians also made use of late Jewish speculations about Melchisedech, seeing in him a more exalted mediatorial figure than Christ himself.[14] This line of thought, which Adolf von Harnack dubbed "dynamic" or "dynamistic monarchianism,"[15] seems to have been part of a much wider pattern of early Christian argument, ranging in character from popular to highly learned, which set out to place Gospel faith within the longer tradition of both Jewish Biblical monotheism and its Hellenistic philosophical counterpart. In such thinking, Jesus is seen as the appointed spokesman, the eschatological messenger of the one and only God, but not as himself a genuinely divine figure.

Alongside this approach, the same decades around the turn of the third century saw the rise of what Harnack called "modalistic monarchianism," a view of the divine being that seems also to have conceived of God as ontologically one, but as revealing himself in genuinely different ways, under different "faces" (πρόσωπα), through sacred history; those who espoused this position, such as Noetus of Smyrna and his disciples, as well as the mysterious "Praxeas" refuted by Tertullian, were charged with saying "that the Christ was the Father himself, and

[14] Ps.-Tertullian, *Against all Heresies* 8 (CSEL 47:225–226; repr. CCL 2:1410); Eduard Schwartz argued that this work was originally written in Greek by Pope Zephyrinus or one of his clerics, and translated into Latin in the early fourth century by Victorinus of Poetovio: *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 3 (Munich, 1936), 38–45. For Jewish speculations on Melchisedek, see especially the Qumran fragment 11Q13, first published by A.S. van der Woude, "Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI," *OtSt* 14 (1965): 354–373. For a discussion of this and other texts from Qumran referring to Melchisedek, as well as of the "Melchisedekian" Christians of the late second and early third centuries, see F.W. Horton, *The Melchisedek Tradition. A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 60–82 (Qumran), 90–101 (Christian sects); and Claudio Gianotto, *Melchisedek e la sua tipologia. Tradizione giudaiche, cristiane e gnostiche (sec. II a.C.—sec. III d.C.)* (Brescia: Paideia, 1984), 61–80 (Qumran), 237–254 (Christian sects).

[15] See *History of Dogma* 3.8–50.

that the Father himself was begotten and suffered and died;"[16] in other words, they failed to make the necessary distinction between the divine Savior presented in the Gospels and the Divine in itself. Both the former, "adoptionist" or "dynamic" kind of monarchianism and the latter, "modalist" form—different as they may have been in their willingness to call Jesus divine—shared at least a strong sense of the evangelical priority of emphasizing the divine unity, the undivided "monarchy" or rule of God in the world. Manlio Simonetti argued plausibly, some twenty years ago, that while these two forms of unitive Christian theology may well have been developed in the late second and early third century—in Asia Minor and in Rome, especially—in resistance to the more philosophically self-conscious and speculative Logos-Christology of Justin, Irenaeus, Clement and Origen, their roots lay in the original Jewish and Christian instinct of rejecting all forms of polytheism.[17] Nevertheless, both approaches had clear implications for how one understood the person of Jesus.

2. The two main contemporary responses that survive to the modalist form of "monarchian" theology were Hippolytus' little treatise *Against Noetus*—a work whose authorship has been much disputed in recent years, but which seems to have been written by a Greek in Asia Minor sometime around 200[18]—and Tertullian's work *Against Praxeas*, composed in Carthage probably between 213 and 217. Although the arguments and assumptions of these works are different in important respects, they are also remarkably similar in their insistence that Christian faith demands an understanding of God that makes room—somehow

[16] Hippolytus, *Against Noetus* 1.2; cf. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 1: the devil, working through Praxeas, "says that the Father himself came down into the Virgin, himself was born of her, himself suffered, in short himself is Jesus Christ."

[17] See Manlio Simonetti, "Il problema dell'unità di Dio a Roma da Clemente a Dionigi," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 22 (1986) 439–474 (= *Studi sulla cristologia del II e III secolo* [Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 44; Rome, 1993] 183–215); "Sabellio e il sabellianismo," *Studi storico-religiose* 4 (1980) 7–28 (= *Studi sulla cristologia*, 217–238, esp. 236).

[18] See M. Simonetti, "Tra Noeto, Ippolito e Melitone," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 38 (1995): 393–414, for an argument in favor of this dating and a survey of the long controversy about the authorship of the works ascribed, in ancient or modern times, to Hippolytus of Rome. For more recent consideration of the origin of the commentaries and theological works ascribed to Hippolytus, see J.A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West. The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

or other—for calling Christ and the Holy Spirit both genuinely distinct from the Father and genuinely divine, all the while preserving the accepted biblical and philosophical principle that the divine power ruling creation is radically one in its being and action.

Hippolytus begins his refutation of Noetus' modalist doctrine by asserting what he calls—in Irenean fashion—"the answer of the elders":

> We, too, know that there is truly one God.[19] We know Christ. We know that the Son suffered, in the way that he suffered; that he died, in the way that he died; that he rose on the third day and is at the right hand of the Father, and that he is coming to judge living and dead. And we say what we have learned.[20]

Reliable Church tradition, in other words, affirms both the singleness of God and the story of the "economy" of salvation by the death and resurrection of Christ; this twofold tradition must be the guiding norm for any further elaboration of Christian theology. "After all," Hippolytus asks rhetorically a few paragraphs later, "would not everyone say that there is only one God? But not everyone would scrap the economy!"[21]

Hippolytus' own approach to explaining how the three "faces" (πρόσωπα) of God encountered in sacred history can be a single divine Mystery is worked out mainly in terms of action and power—in functional terms, one might say. Christ rules over all things, Hippolytus observes in one passage, but is himself—according to 1 Cor 15:23–28—also subject to the Father, "so that in all things a single God may be revealed."[22] A little further on, he compares the unity of Christ and the Father, which Jesus claims in John 10.30, to the unity Jesus prays for among his disciples (John 17:22–23): a unity not in substance (οὐσίᾳ) but "in power (δυνάμει), by our disposition towards single-mindedness."[23] Still further on, in a passage Simonetti has characterized as a "pioneering" statement of Trinitarian theology,[24] Hippolytus develops further his understanding of the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in terms of the

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[19] Or, in the translation of Robert Butterworth, *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum* (Heythrop Monographs 2; London: Heythrop, 1977) 44: "We, too, have knowledge of a single God—in the true way."

[20] *Noet.* 1.7.

[21] *Noet.* 3.4 (trans. Butterworth, altered).

[22] *Noet.* 6.4.

[23] *Noet.* 7.3 (trans. Butterworth, altered; Butterworth translates δυνάμνει here as "virtually").

[24] "Tra Noeto, Ippolito e Melitone," 395.

single "harmonious economy" (οἰκονομία συμφωνίας), the unified historical work of revelation and salvation, which they achieve together:

> "The Father gives orders, the Word performs the work, and is revealed as Son, through whom belief is accorded to the Father … For the one who commands is the Father, the one who obeys is the Son, and the one who brings about understanding is the Holy Spirit. He who is Father is over all things," he adds, alluding to Eph 4:6, "and the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things. We can get no idea of the one God other than by really believing in Father and Son and Holy Spirit."[25]

Although God is always "single" (μόνος), according to Hippolytus, he is also, in his own being, "manifold" (πολύς): a multiplicity that is first revealed when God utters his Word of creation and revelation,[26] and when he inspires the prophets by his Spirit;[27] we have come to "see" this manifold reality of God in the incarnate Word.[28]

The real issue for Hippolytus, in arguing for a plurality or Trinity within the single being of God, is clearly to make possible an understanding of the "economy" of salvation in which the Son and the Holy Spirit can be understood as genuinely divine, and yet as genuinely present and acting in the world as the New Testament portrays them, not distanced from the world in the way some ancient philosophical schools imagined divine agency. So the treatise closes with an extended passage in an exalted rhetorical tone, rehearsing the narrative of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection as the paradoxical story of "God embodied": as one who truly suffered, mentally and physically, while remaining capable of miracles; as one sent into the world by the Father, returning his soul to the Father, raised by the Father from the dead, and finally breathing forth his living Spirit on the disciples.[29]

> "So let us in the future believe, blessed brethren," Hippolytus writes at the start of this final meditation, "in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles, that God the Word came down from the heavens into the holy virgin Mary, so that once he had taken flesh out of her, and taken a soul of the human kind—a rational one, I mean—and had become everything that a human being is, sin excepted, he might save fallen Adam and procure incorruption for such as believe in his name."[30]

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[25] *Noet.* 14.4–6 (trans. Butterworth, altered).
[26] *Noet.* 10.2–11.3.
[27] *Noet.* 11.4.
[28] *Noet.* 12.5–13.1.
[29] *Noet.* 17–18.
[30] *Noet.* 17.2.

Hippolytus' rhetoric here suggests that all his earlier speculation about the internal plurality and unity of God is really meant to lay an intelligible foundation for proclaiming this astonishing Gospel of the "harmonious economy" of salvation.

Tertullian's treatise *Against Praxeas* is a much more elaborate work, with extended discussion of Scriptural passages that bear on the question of the inner unity and plurality of God; Tertullian also makes an original and important attempt to develop philosophical categories for expressing just what, in God, is single and what is threefold.[31] For Tertullian, as for Hippolytus, what is at stake in the discussion with those who assert a modalist view of God—who say, as his pseudonymous opponent "Praxeas" is made to say, that "the Father himself came down into the Virgin, himself was born of her, himself suffered, in short himself is Jesus Christ"—is really the Christian narrative of the saving economy. Citing what he calls the "rule of the faith," he insists that

> we believe … in one only God, yet subject to this dispensation (which is our word for "economy"), that the one only God has also a Son, his Word, who has proceeded from himself, by whom all things were made …; that this Son was sent by the Father into the virgin and was born of her both human and God …; that he suffered, died, and was buried, according to the scriptures, and having been raised up by the Father and taken back into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father …; and that thereafter he, according to his promise, sent from the Father the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.[32]

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[31] See especially chapters 2, 7, 9, 23, 26 and 27. Tertullian's theological vocabulary, and its background in Roman law and Hellenistic philosophy, has been analyzed at length by modern scholars: see especially Joseph Moingt, *La théologie trinitaire de Tertullien* (4 vols.; Paris: Aubier, 1966–1969); René Braun, *Deus Christianorum. Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien* (2d ed.: Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1977); and the introduction to the text and translation of the work by Ernest Evans, *Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas* (London: SPCK, 1948). For the connections between Tertullian's Trinitarian and Christological use of the same terms, see also Abramowski, "Συνάφεια und ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις," 80–86. A good recent survey of Tertullian's theology is Eric F. Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[32] *Prax.* 2. In citing this work, I use the translation of Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas*. In a short but perceptive article, Robert Markus has argued that Tertullian's use of the word οἰκονομία/*dispositio* in the *Against Praxeas* seems to have a different sense from that in which Hippolytus uses it in *Contra Noetum*. Tertullian seems to be using it, Markus argues, in its "original, secular sense," to mean the ordering or arrangement of the three constituent "elements" of the Godhead; for Hippolytus, on the other hand, as for later writers, it clearly points to the incarnation of God's Word in history. See "Trinitarian Theology and the Economy," *JTS* n.s. 9 (1958): 89–102.

Tertullian makes several attempts to explain how it is that the single divine Mystery or monarchy at the heart of this "economy" can at the same time be permanently and intrinsically manifold: a functional explanation, somewhat like that advanced by Hippolytus, which offers the analogy of an Emperor delegating rule to his son to carry out the administration of his empire more effectively;[33] an explanation in terms of differing rank within a single *status* or socio-legal category, like the various castes of Roman citizens;[34] even an explanation in terms of the process of thought itself, anticipating Augustine's more extended analogy in *De Trinitate* VIII–X, in which the physical uttering of words is always preceded by a kind of mental dialogue between reason (*ratio*) and language (*sermo*).[35] The predominant set of terms Tertullian uses, however, to grapple with the paradox of divine unity and multiplicity is a more material one: the category of substance (*substantia*), which can be one even while it takes on a variety of forms and shapes. So his use of what were to become three common Patristic analogies for the Trinity—water flowing from a spring to a river to a drainage canal; light issuing from the sun, first as a beam and then reflected as a bright spot on an object; the stalk of a plant issuing from a root and bearing fruit on its branches—are all, in Tertullian's treatment, essentially images drawn from the material world, reflecting his general assumption (borrowed from Stoic philosophy) that all real things, even the reality we call "spirit," are in some sense *material*, if they are not simply mental or imaginary.[36] In this latter sense, Father, Son and Spirit all share the one divine "substance" or "stuff" that issues forth from the Father—"not that the Son is other than the Father by diversity, but by distribution … For the Father is the whole substance, while the Son is an outflow (*derivatio*) and assignment (*portio*) of the whole …"[37]

Towards the end of the treatise, however, Tertullian makes the same implicit connection that Hippolytus had made between the issue of divine unity and multiplicity and the person of the Savior. As in Hippolytus' *Contra Noetum*, this rhetorical positioning of the Christological argument, at the conclusion of the treatise, gives it particular force. His opponents, Tertullian says—those who assert that in some sense

[33] *Prax.* 3.
[34] *Prax.* 2, 3, 4.
[35] *Prax.* 5.
[36] See, for example, *Prax.* 26.
[37] *Prax.* 9.

it was the Father, the God of Israel, who was present in the world and who suffered as Christ—attempt to do justice to the New Testament texts by asserting that while the divine Word mentioned in the prologue to John's Gospel is essentially an act of God, a *vox et sonus oris*,[38] the one who audibly speaks of the Father and prays to the Father in the Gospels, the Jesus whom we call Son of God, is in fact simply a man; so the divine suffering that saves us is really only the Father's compassion for him, the sympathetic presence with the man Jesus of a God who is wholly other than he, and who bestows on him a share in the name of "Christ" simply by being a powerful, "anointing" presence within him.

> "Those who contend that the Father and the Son are one and the same," Tertullian writes, "now [in the context of the story of Jesus] begin to divide them rather than to call them one. For if Jesus is one and Christ is another, the Son will be one and the Father another, because Jesus is the son and Christ is the Father."[39]

Tertullian's own reason for insisting on the personal distinctness of Son and Spirit from the Father, within the divine substance and activity, now becomes clearer: it is to make conceptually possible a real identification of the divine Word with human flesh, in such a way that Jesus can himself be personally "the Christ," "anointed" in his saving role by the gift of the Spirit who belongs uniquely to him, related to the Father as Son and related to the rest of humanity as brother and Lord. If Jesus is a single agent, a single Savior who is both human and divine, he must be a single "person," both over against the Father and over against us. So in a passage that remarkably anticipates both the *Tome* of Leo and the Chalcedonian definition of Christological faith, two and a half centuries later, Tertullian writes:

> Certainly we find him set forth as in every respect Son of God and son of man, since we find him as both God and human, without doubt according to each substance as it is distinct in what itself is. Because neither is the Word anything else but God nor the flesh anything else but human … We observe a double quality (*status*), not confused but combined, Jesus in one person God and human … And to such a degree did there remain unimpaired the proper being of each substance, that in him the spirit carried out its own acts, that is powers and works and signs, while the flesh accomplished its own passions …, and at length it also died.[40]

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[38] *Prax.*7.
[39] *Prax.* 27; cf. also 29.
[40] *Prax.* 27.

Tertullian is affirming here the rich and complex texture of the person and activities of Christ, as they appear in the Gospels; but it is only the distinctness of persons within the divine reality that makes conceivable, within some kind of narrative and ontological unity, the genuine divinity and humanity, at once, of him whom the Scriptures call both Son of God and Son of Man.

3. A second controversy from the Patristic era, which suggests a strong reciprocal influence between the understanding of the persons of the Trinity and that of the person of Christ, was the mid-fourth-century debate over the theology of Marcellus of Ancyra. Marcellus is a figure who has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars in recent years; new attributions and identifications of pseudepigraphical works as his, new analyses of the fragments of his work in the polemical treatises of his opponents (notably Eusebius of Caesaraea), as well as a growing new way of reading the actual theological issues of the mid-fourth century, have all led to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of Marcellus' complex and subtle theological work than was generally possible twenty-five years ago.[41]

One of the most controversial and widely hated theologians of his time, Marcellus represented the strongest theological affirmation that was thinkable of the substantial inner unity of God in the decades following the council of Nicaea. While most Eastern bishops, in the aftermath of Nicaea, were satisfied that the real benefit of the Council had been its rejection of the crude ontological subordinationism popularized by Arius and his supporters, they also seem to have been far less than enthusiastic about the Council's credal formulation of faith—particularly about the term *homoousios*, which had a provocatively overunitive, even modalist ring.[42] Even Athanasius, who would become an impassioned promoter of the Nicene formula in the late 340s and 350s, as the only possible antidote to the continuing threat of "Arianism" in its various forms, made little mention of it in the twenty years that immediately followed the Council. The first committed advocate of the

[41] See especially Joseph T. Lienhard, "Marcellus of Ancyra in Modern Research," *TS* 43 (1982): 486–503; "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered," *TS* 48 (1987): 415–437; Gerhard Feige, *Die Lehre Markells von Ankyra in der Darstellung seiner Gegner* (Leipzig: Benno, 1991); Klaus Seibt, *Die Theologie des Markell von Ankyra* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994); and now Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum. Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

[42] See Barnes, "The Fourth Century" 50–51.

Nicene formulation of the divine Mystery whom we know of, perhaps one of its original architects, was Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra in Asia Minor and close associate of Eustathius of Antioch, who was himself one of the leading heirs of the anti-Origenist, strongly unitive theology represented by Paul of Samosata in the late third century.[43]

From all the evidence, Marcellus emphasized in his writings that God is radically one, and utterly inconceivable: one substance or οὐσία, one concrete being or ὑπόστασις, one source of action or *persona* (πρόσωπον).[44] When we consider the economy of salvation, we can say that this divine monad has "expanded" for our sakes into a plurality of *personae*, but Biblical faith must continue to affirm that all of these forms—the God of creation and the God of Sinai, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are fundamentally "one and the same." God's Logos or Word is eternally present in God as a power or potentiality (δύναμις), which becomes actual when God "speaks the word" of creation, revelation or salvation. It is only in the event of the Incarnation, Marcellus holds—echoing a tradition reaching back to Hippolytus—that the Word can be said to be "begotten" or can be called "Son;" for this reason, Marcellus seems to conceive of Jesus, the distinct individual whom we call Son of God, not as himself the divine Word but as "the human flesh, which God's word took up."[45] In another fragment, Marcellus makes it clear that the Incarnation does not imply any real duality of persons within God:

> For if spirit [which Marcellus uses as a generic term for the divine substance] is considered in its own right, the Logos rightly is understood as one and the same with God; but if the fleshly addition, which the Savior [that is, the one God] took on himself, is considered, the divinity appears simply to have expanded, in this regard, as an active power, so that the Monad remains, as we would expect, really undivided.[46]

In "taking up" the human Jesus, Son of Man, Marcellus asserts in another passage, the Logos has "prepared the Man"—and it is unclear whether he is using ἄνθρωπος here in an individual or a universal sense—"to become, by adoption, Son of God, so that when all this

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[43] See A.H.B. Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of AD 325: Antioch, Ancyra, and Nicaea," *JTS* 43 (1992): 428–446.

[44] For a brief summary of Marcellus' theology, see Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy," 426–427; see also the other works mentioned above.

[45] *Fr.* 63.

[46] *Fr.* 71.

is achieved it might once again, as Logos, be united with God,"[47] and become again simply what the Logos has always been: the Word of God. As a result, the presence of the Logos in the human Jesus always remains, in Marcellus' view, the presence of a transcendent power that is totally other in substance and agency from Jesus the man; the story of Jesus' agony in the Garden, for instance, makes it clear not only that Christ possesses two wills, but that these wills, in turn, reveal two willing subjects, two ontological sources of action:

> For that the Father has so willed is clear from the fact that what he willed came to pass; but that the Son did not so will is clear from what he asks for. After all, he says in another place, "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me."[48]

One of Marcellus' most outspoken opponents throughout the 330s was Eusebius of Caesaraea: the heir of Origen's exegetical and theological legacy at Caesaraea and the most articulate exponent of a nuanced, if still clearly subordinationist, Origenist view of God as a Trinity of distinct *personae*. Eusebius criticizes Marcellus not only for his denial of eternal reality to these divine "persons," but for all that this denial implies for Christology. Like most fourth-century theologians, from the bishops gathered at Antioch in 268 until Apollinarius of Laodicaea a century later, Eusebius assumed that a true Christian confession of the divinity of Christ meant an affirmation that the eternal divine reason or Logos has become the subjective center of Jesus the man, taking the place in him of a human intelligence or *nous*. So Eusebius asks rhetorically, in his anti-Marcellan work, *The Church's Theology*:

> If Marcellus says that the Word, while in the flesh, spoke these phrases [Eusebius is referring to John 6:48, "I am the bread of life," and 6:51, "I am the living bread, which has come down from heaven"] still why should we affirm this as grounds for confessing that he is not Son, but only Word? How did he exist in the flesh when he spoke these things? Surely as one who was alive, who subsisted, whose existence was "outside" (ἐκτός) the Father! And what was the Father at that time, if he did not have his own Word within him but existed without a Word? But when the Word dwelt in the flesh, when he engaged in his earthly activities, if he was "outside" the Father—alive and subsistent and giving motion to the flesh in the way a soul does—surely he was another alongside the Father; and two hypostases existed, he himself and the Father . . .[49]

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[47] *Fr.* 41.
[48] *Fr.* 73.
[49] Eusebius, *Eccl. Theol.* 1.20.39–41.

Kelly McCarthy Spoerl has argued that in fact one of the driving forces behind the theological and Christological work of Apollinarius of Laodicaea, in the 360s and 370s, was his own fierce opposition to both Arius and Marcellus.[50] This is especially clear in his short synthetic work, Ἡ κατὰ μέρος πίστις (*The Faith*—or *The Creed—in Detail*). The first twelve chapters of this treatise, in Hans Lietzmann's modern edition,[51] are devoted to rejecting the "Arian" assertion that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are creatures, sent to do God's work in the world; the Christian understanding of salvation requires instead, Apollinarius insists, the recognizably Athanasian confession that even "while the word of God conducted himself like a man, carrying out his appointed tasks while uniquely joined to the flesh, still he preserved the divine presence to all things."[52] The second, longer part of the treatise, however, is directed against those who deny that there are three persons in God, and "say that the Father and the Son are really the same"[53]—Marcellus and his followers, in other words. After an elaborate investigation of the Scriptural basis for speaking of three distinct and eternal "persons" (πρόσωπα) or sources of activity in God, Apollinarius shows that this very conception of God is the basis for what he understands to be an orthodox view of the person of Christ:

> We believe that God became incarnate in human flesh; that nevertheless he possesses his own proper activity unadulterated, since his mind is untrammeled by the sufferings of spirit and flesh; that he directs the flesh and its fleshly motions in a divine and sinless way … He is true God, who, though not Himself flesh, has appeared in the flesh, perfect with a true and divine perfection, neither two persons nor two natures. After all, we do not say that we worship four—God, and the Son of God, and a human being, and the Holy Spirit … But we say that the Word of God became human for our salvation, in order that we might receive the likeness of the heavenly man and that we might be divinized in the likeness of him who is by nature the true Son of God, and in his flesh the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ.[54]

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[50] Kelley McCarthy Spoerl, "Apollinarian Christology and the Anti-Marcellan Tradition," *JTS* 45 n.s. (1994) 545–568. See also Abramowski, "Συνάφεια und ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις," 103–105.

[51] Hans Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule. Texte und Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1904; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970) 167–171.

[52] *The Faith in Detail* 12 (Lietzmann 171); cf. Athanasius, *Against the Pagans* 41–45; *On the Incarnation* 8, 41–42.

[53] Apollinarius, *The Faith in Detail* 13; Lietzmann 171–172.

[54] *The Faith in Detail* 30–31: Lietzmann 178–179.

A little further on, Apollinarius sums up his integrated view of the Son of God, as central to the Christian confession both of God and of the person of the Savior:

> There is one Son, the same before and after the incarnation, God and human, one and the same in each state. The divine Word is not another person alongside the man Jesus; but rather he, the pre-existent Son, came to unite himself to flesh taken from Mary, and established himself as a perfect and holy and sinless man; and thus he worked the renewal of humanity and the salvation of the whole world.[55]

Whatever questions would later be raised about the adequacy of Apollinarius' conception of the humanity of Christ, in which the divine Logos or Wisdom took the place of a human *logos* or *nous*—a conception, as I have said, that he shared with more than a century of predominantly Origenist theologians before him (although not with Origen himself), including the opponents of Paul of Samosata, Arius, Eusebius of Caesaraea and possibly even Athanasius[56]—his insistence here on the intrinsic connection between the real existence of the Son in the Trinitarian Mystery and his real existence as a single Savior, necessarily both divine and human if he is really to bring humanity face to face with God, is itself a classical expression of what would become orthodox Christology.

4. As a final tableau in this rogues' gallery of ancient Trinitarian and Christological disputes, let us look briefly at the fifth-century controversy over the constitution of Christ's person, especially as it involved the Antiochene approach to theology and Scripture, represented by Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius of Constantinople, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, over against what is commonly called the "Alexandrian" tradition, represented above all by the Archbishop Cyril.[57] By the third decade of the fifth century, of course, when this

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[55] *The Faith in Detail* 36: Lietzmann 181.

[56] For an illuminating discussion of the Pauline roots of Apollinarius' conception of the person of Christ as "heavenly man," see Rowan A. Greer, "The Man from Heaven: Paul's Last Adam and Apollinarius' Christ," in William S. Babcock, ed., *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 165–182.

[57] Theological scholarship has undoubtedly over-simplified the process of Christological debate and exegetical practice in the fourth and fifth centuries by speaking of the "schools" of Antioch and Alexandria as if they were parallel phenomena, mutually shaping each other by their polemics. It would be more accurate to say that the work of a century of Scriptural interpreters based in Antioch—beginning with Diodore of Tarsus and continuing especially in Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of

tempest had reached gale force, open debate in the Greek-speaking Church over the unity and Trinity of God had, to a large extent, subsided. While the Council of Constantinople in 381 had made no attempt to define formally the ways in which the divine Mystery is one and is three, or to specify the relationship of the unity of God to the person of Christ, still the Cappadocian conception of a God, one in root being and in all activity, yet eternally and irreducibly three concrete *things*, three hypostases, because of the distinctive ways in which Father, Son, and Spirit share and realize the divine being, was clearly the unspoken background both for the Council's new, extended version of the Nicene formula of faith and for its anathemas against Arians, modalists and Apollinarians alike. For Eastern bishops and theologians who wished to remain in the "mainstream" imperial Church, the controversy over the substance and persons of God had essentially been settled, by consensus, in Cappadocian terms.

Yet it can be argued that the real distinction in thought between the Antiochene and Alexandrian "schools" of theology in the late fourth and fifth centuries was not simply a quarrel about the structure of Christ's person as an isolated issue; their debate, rather, revealed fundamentally different conceptions of how God is involved in creation and history. In the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his pupils, and perhaps even in that of Theodore's teacher, Diodore of Tarsus, sound theology and sound exegesis were both thought to rest on their ability to preserve the transcendence of God—even of a God conceived as eternally Trinitarian—from the compromise of a too-direct involvement in the categories and events of history, especially from the compromises of circumscription and passibility. Alongside this concern to emphasize God's otherness, God's distance from the limitations of the

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Cyrrhus—grew up as a reaction against the exegesis of late-fourth-century Origenist scholars based in Egypt, especially Didymus the Blind and Evagrius of Pontus. The difference between these two approaches was theological, rather than "methodological" in a modern sense; it involved varying conceptions of the shape and significance of sacred history, and differing ideas of how God is related to the world. But it is important to remember that the approach to both the Bible and to God's presence in history represented by Didymus and later by Cyril of Alexandria was much more representative of the "mainstream" position of early Christian writers than was that of their Antiochene critics. For contemporary scholarly analysis of the relationships of these two "schools", see especially Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 161–212; and John J. O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology," *TS* 58 (1997): 39–60; "Theodoret's Line in the Sand: Saying 'No' to Diodore," forthcoming.

created order, the early Antiochenes showed a concern to protect, in their account of God's acts in history, the autonomy and narrative causality of the created order itself. God beckons to us, they argued, through the typological events of history, guides us providentially by his grace and by the influence of the Holy Spirit in us, reveals to us in the resurrection of Jesus the eschatological salvation to come. But to speak of God acting directly, personally, in human history, in such a way that God can be personally encountered in human events by human beings, was, for them, to introduce a confusion of the divine and the human that was potentially destructive of a right understanding of both.[58]

Because of this concern to protect the Christian understanding of God's transcendence and inner unity—the unity of all three πρόσωπα or *personae* who share the divine substance—all the representatives of the "school" of Antioch were bitter opponents both of the Arian and the Apollinarian theologies. Theodore of Mopsuestia, for instance, in the third of his *Catechetical Homilies*, seems to continue to use *hypostasis*-language[59] for the divine substance, in pre-Cappadocian style, as a synonym for οὐσία[60] and emphasizes, in the following homily, both the "unbridgeable gulf" in being between God and creation and the identity of "substance" between God the Father and the Son who "took on" the human being, Jesus of Nazareth.[61] The historian Socrates tells us that when Theodore's pupil Nestorius came to Constantinople as the new Patriarch in April of 428, he immediately attacked the remnants of

[58] For a fuller discussion of the predominant understanding of the relationship of God to creation in the Antiochene writers, see G. Koch, *Die Heilsverwirklichung bei Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Munich: Hueber, 1965); idem, *Strukturen und Geschichte des Heils in der Theologie des Theodoret von Kyros. Eine dogmen- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1974); Joanne McWilliam Dewart, *The Theology of Grace of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1971); G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini: Eschatological Thought in Fourth-Century Apses and Catecheses* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 208–231.

[59] In the extant Syriac translation, *qnomā*, which is normally the equivalent of Greek ὑπόστασις. See also Greek fragments 7 and 8 of Theodore's work *On the Incarnation*, where the separate divine and human realities in Christ are referred to as ὑποστάσεις.

[60] At the beginning of the chapter, Theodore says of the Logos: "To indicate that he was with God—not from outside, as a stranger, but of the very nature (*kyonā*) of the substance (*'ithutha*)—he was called Word." *Catechetical Homily* 3.14; *Les Homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste* (ed. R. Tonneau and R. Devreesse; Studi e Testi 145; Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1949), 73. For Theodore's use of the word *hypostasis* (*qnomā*) in the same sense in the same chapter, see p. 74.

[61] See *Cat. Hom.* 4.6–13 (Tonneau and Devreesse, 83–91).

the Arian community there with a reformer's zeal;[62] he later defended his campaign against the Marian title *Theotokos* as essentially a way of protecting the "coessential Godhead" from the "Arian" suggestion that any one of the three "persons" in God is subject to passibility or limitation.[63] And Silke-Petra Bergjan has shown, in her study of Theodoret of Cyrus' Trinitarian theology, that that last, most centrist representative of the fourth- and fifth-century "school of Antioch" also weighted his presentation of the Trinity "auf die Einheit Gottes hin," and put particular stress on the infinite ontological distance between God and creation.[64] Theodoret's discussion of the unity of God, Bergjan convincingly argues, is mainly developed in terms of the divine attributes recognized by Greek philosophy, buttressed by Biblical texts but not primarily derived from the Biblical narrative or conceived in biblical categories.[65] Although Theodoret accepts the now-canonical Cappadocian language of one οὐσία and three ὑποστάσεις when speaking directly of the Trinitarian Mystery, he is generally unwilling to apply that same terminology to the complex being and simple subjective center of Christ. Both terms, presumably, still suggested too much metaphysical density, so that Theodoret speaks of Christ almost exclusively in the more dynamic, behavioral terms of two irreducibly different "natures" (φύσεις) united in the common self-presentation or role of a single *persona* (πρόσωπον).[66]

Cyril of Alexandria, the prime opponent of these Antiochene theologians in the second quarter of the fifth century, also habitually uses

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[62] *Hist. eccl.* 7.29.

[63] See especially his "second letter" to Cyril of Alexandria (*Collectio Vaticana* 5.4–7: *ACO* 1.1.1.30.4–32.4); also his *Book of Heracleides* II/1 (trans. S.R. Driver and L. Hodgson [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925], 162, 174–175).

[64] Silke-Petra Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus und der Neunizänismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 192–193.

[65] Silke-Petra Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus*, 192, 195.

[66] For references in the works of Theodoret, see Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus*, 195, 203–205, 207–210. Bergjan acknowledges her indebtedness to K. McNamara, "Theodoret of Cyrus and the Unity of Person in Christ," *ITQ* 24 (1957): 313–328. On the development of Theodoret's terminology and conception of the unity of substances in the person of Christ, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I (2d Ed.; Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), 488–495. Grillmeier observes (489) that although, in some works written after the Council of Chalcedon, Theodoret seems to have been willing to speak of the one Christ as a single hypostasis, his earlier writings suggest that he, like Cyril, continued—in spite of the Cappadocian attempt to regulate the use of these terms—to take ὑπόστασις as a synonym for φύσις or nature: the reality that something is, and according to which it operates.

the Cappadocian terminology in speaking of the unity and Trinity of God;[67] like the Antiochenes, he uses this terminology also in speaking of the unity and difference in the person of Christ, without ever explicitly clarifying the connection between the two fields of discussion.[68] Even more than the Antiochenes, however, Cyril's voluminous treatises on the Trinity stress the permanent threeness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the single, simple being of God.[69] Although Father and Son cannot be thought of apart from each other, he argues in his second *Dialogue on the Trinity*,[70] still the Son is constituted a distinct hypostasis—a real, individual, concrete "thing"—by the Father's causal relationship to him.[71] Even though the first chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the Son as the "stamp" (χαρακτήρ) of the Father's hypostasis (Heb 1:3), Cyril insists this must not be taken to suggest the Son is simply an accident, an ἀνυπόστατος χαρακτήρ, of some unitary divine substance.[72] Cyril's sense of the urgency of affirming the distinctness of persons within the Mystery of God seems to be inherently linked to his Christological concern to emphasize that the Savior is a *single* Son, a single acting subject, even though Cyril never reflects on the link explicitly. So he readily makes use of the phrase "union in hypostasis" (ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν) in his earlier controversial writings—a phrase that to Theodoret seemed to compromise the Son's transcendence as a hypostasis within the being of God, and even to suggest a return to Arianism.[73] For Cyril, only language such as this, with its unmistakably

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[67] See, for example, Cyril's letter *De recta fide ad Pulcheriam et Eudociam* (ed. Philip E. Pusey; Oxford: Parker, 1877), 7.321.11-322.7, where he carefully summarizes the Cappadocian picture of a God one in substance and activity, but three in hypostases because of the relationships of origin among them; cf. *Adversus Nestorium* 4.1 (Pusey 6.179.17–27); 4.2 (Pusey 6.185.24–186.1; 187.1–18); 5.6 (Pusey 6.122.17-30).

[68] See Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus*, 190–191.

[69] See, for example, *Dialogues on the Trinity* 7 (641.6–17: SC 246:171); *Adv. Nest.* 4.1 (Pusey 6.179.17–27); 4.2 (Pusey 6.185.24–186.1). See Bergjan 181, n. 58. For a very full and perceptive discussion of Cyril's Trinitarian theology, see Marie-Odile Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Institut des Études Augustiniennes, 1974); see also Mme. Boulnois' summary article, "The Mystery of the Trinity according to Cyril of Alexandria: the Deployment of the Triad and its Recapitulation into the Unity of Divinity," in Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, eds., *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 75–112.

[70] *Dial.* 2 (449.31–38: SC 231:318); see Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus*, 178.

[71] *Dial.* 2 (431.29–39: SC 231:264–266).

[72] *Dial.* 5 (557.32–40: SC 237:298; 558.30–43: SC 237:302).

[73] See Cyril, *Apologia for the Twelve Anathemas, against Theodoret* 4 (*ACO* 1.1.6; 121.2–4); 2 (114.10–12).

trinitarian overtones, can convey the full reality of who it is that we encounter, who it is that is acting among us, in Christ. So he writes, in his *Apology for the Twelve Anathemas, against Theodoret*:

> The phrase "in hypostasis" signifies nothing else than simply that the nature or hypostasis of the Logos—that is, the Logos himself—joined in truth to a human nature without any kind of change or confusion …, is recognized and is in fact one Christ, the same both God and a human being.[74]

It is this single hypostasis, whose primordial *nature* or principle of activity is that of the divine substance, whom Cyril—even in his writings before the Nestorian crisis—recognized as the ontological center of the person of Jesus, the source of the divine gifts and energies manifested in him. "We must attribute priority (τὸ πρεσβύτατον), then, to him," he writes in his dialogue *On the Incarnation*, "even when united to flesh: to God, that is, naturally united to flesh and accustomed to share with his own body the riches of his proper nature."[75]

Much more than either the Christology or the theology of any of the Antiochenes, Cyril's understanding of the person of the Son—both within the divine Mystery and as he is encountered in history—is in fact derived from the New Testament: from the narrative of the preaching and miracles of Christ; from his suffering, which Christians confess as redemptive; from his resurrection, which revealed the full meaning of his Sonship and the full power and promise of his Holy Spirit. In his tract *On the True Faith, to the Princesses Pulcheria and Eudokia*, for instance, from the year 430, Cyril explains St. Paul's reference to God the Father as "the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead" (Rom 4:24) by giving a detailed reflection on the rhythmic flow of life among the persons of the Trinity.[76] He immediately goes on to consider Paul's treatment of our own baptism "into the death of Christ," in Romans 6:3–8, and insists that if this baptism is done "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," then the mortal, passible Son whose death gives us life in baptism must be identical with the eternal Son of the Father and the giver of the eternal Spirit:

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[74] Cyril, *Apologia* 2 (*ACO* 1.1.6; 115.12–16).

[75] *On the Incarnation of the Only-begotten* (SC 97:292, ll. 13–15). On the dating of this dialogue, see the introduction to that SC volume by G.M. de Durand, 52.

[76] *On the True Faith, to the Princesses Pulcheria and Eudokia* 35 (Pusey 7.321.11–322.17).

> It is necessary to recognize, then, that the Word of God, having come to be as we are, willingly suffered in the flesh. For these are the conditions under which we are baptized into his death: that he is one Son, impassible in the nature of Godhead, but passible in the flesh. How, then, could anyone doubt that Christ shapes us anew, by his resurrection, into newness of life? For he presents us to himself and to the Father "as if we had come alive from the dead" (Rom 6:13), as Scripture says: dead to sin, but alive in righteousness (cf. Rom 6:10–11).[77]

For Cyril, the identification of the eternal Son of God as the one who has offered for us the sacrifice of his own human death, and who continues to intercede for us with the Father as our priest, "vested in the robes of divinity as God and offering priestly service as a man" (λειτουργῶν ἀνθρωπίνως)[78] is precisely the reason it is so essential to maintain a clear understanding of the abiding distinction of persons within the divine Mystery. Otherwise we are left with the absurd alternatives of either imagining the risen Jesus, the eternal priest of the Letter to the Hebrews, as a human "Son" who has now become an honorary fourth member of the Trinity,[79] or of ruling out the continuing role of the Son in the historical sanctification of humanity.

At the end of this somewhat sketchy survey of early Trinitarian and Christological debate, let us attempt to draw a few more general conclusions.

1. The reason there seems to be so strong a link—a kind of reverse proportion—in the minds of these early theologians, between the way we understand unity and distinction in God and the way we understand unity and distinction in the person of Christ, is that these are not merely independent theological ideas, separate areas on the dogmatic map, or separate chapters in the catechism. "Trinitarian theology" and "Christology" are modern terms, not ancient ones, and

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[77] *On the True Faith* 36 (Pusey 7.324.1–9).

[78] *On the True Faith* 28 (Pusey 7.313).

[79] Theodoret, too, in several of his letters from the period of the most intense Christological controversy in the late 440s, insists that he does not hold Christ to be "two Sons," and that the notion of adding a fourth person to the Trinity is blasphemy: e.g., *Epp.* 126, 143, 144, 146. As Bergjan rightly observes, however, "Wie sich … trinitarische Differenz und christologische Einheit zueinander verhalten, bleibt völlig offen. Theodoret formuliert, daß der Menschgewordene kein anderer als die zweite trintarische Person sei, ohne aber auszuformulieren, was die Einheit der Person meint." (*Theodoret von Cyrus*, 204).

represent tracts in the theological curriculum of the modern Western university rather than categories of Patristic discussion. Both of them are really *about* one thing: the Biblical narrative of creation and redemption, the distinctively Christian understanding of how God is related to the world and to history; how God can be both transcendent Mystery—ultimate, infinite, free of creaturely limitations, uncircumscribed by human thought—and also "Emmanuel," God-with-us, God personally encountered in Jesus, God speaking today in the Scriptures and in the Church. What we call the doctrine of the Trinity is really a narrative creed in miniature, a formulaic way of speaking about a God who is active in history, who reveals himself genuinely in the "economy" of salvation witnessed to by the Bible, while remaining beyond history, beyond all human knowing. For Christian faith, Jesus reveals this God to us in his own person as Son, and draws us into this God's inner life, in which his existence as Son is rooted. That is the ultimate reason we call Jesus Savior and Lord.

2. There seem to be, throughout the history of Christian reflection, two basic casts of mind, two pre-dogmatic perspectives that set the stage for the differing approaches to the Trinity and to Christ that we have been discussing here. One tends to place the strongest emphasis on God's *otherness*, God's absoluteness and simplicity as the source and goal of all being; it draws on the Biblical narrative, and Biblical categories for support, of course, but its driving engine seems to be critical reason applied to faith, a philosophical assumption of what God must be like if faith is to be credible. The other mind-set tends to place the strongest emphasis on God's *activity within history*, on God's personal, concrete presence and accessibility in the world and in religious language and action; it makes use of philosophical language and argument, of course, but its driving engine is religious response to the Biblical proclamation. The first mind-set—which is clearly that of a minority in the early Church, even if it was at times an influential minority—shows itself in monarchian and modalist forms of theology, and in the Antiochene tradition of Christology and exegesis; its strength is clearly its reasonableness, but when exaggerated it can become a bloodless and pedantic rationalism. The second, more widespread mind-set shows itself in the Origenist tradition of Trinitarian thought, in Apollinarianism, and in Alexandrian Christology and exegesis; its strength, surely, is its Biblical and existential character, its sacramental and ecclesial implications, and its spiritual intensity, but when it becomes exaggerated—as in the massive, often

violent rejection of the Chalcedonian formula that swept the Greek East in the late fifth century—it can be the root of pious fanaticism. And there were clearly some extraordinary thinkers in the early centuries of theological reflection—Athanasius, the three great Cappadocian Fathers, and Maximus Confessor in the East, as well as Augustine in the West—who are more difficult to identify, precisely because they seem to have avoided both extremes and to have reached out for a carefully-constructed theological and Christological equilibrium.

3. It seems to me at least possible that these two casts of mind with respect to God and the world may also be most typically at home with two rather different perspectives on the role of the *Church* in the world—perhaps even fostered by two different kinds of Church community. Let me advance this further, more tentative suggestion in the form of questions: is it plausible that the more unitive approach to theology, which emphasizes both God's distance from the world and the human completeness of Jesus, in distinction from the divine Logos, tends to be more congenial to those with a more robust view of human authority and a more favorable attitude towards secular institutions and secular forms of behavior? Is it likely that the more Trinitarian approach to theology, with its more integrated and Logos-centered view of the person of Christ, tends to appeal more to Christians who are intensely concerned with maintaining the boundaries between Church and world, who are more willing to challenge human authority, learning and reason in the interests of maintaining the kerygma and the Church's liturgical and devotional traditions?

Clearly such identifications are conjectural, and run the risk of sociological reductionism. Clearly, too, many questions can be raised about the application of such a scheme to the historical evidence we have. But a few aspects of the Patristic cases we have been considering might give this further suggestion some credibility:

a) Despite their condemnation of some of the more extreme representatives of monarchian theology, the bishops of Rome, from the time of Pope Victor until at least the mid-third century, seem strongly to have favored a monarchian or unitive brand of theology; they were also, by and large, strong Church leaders at that period, willing to exercise their own authority in reconciling the *lapsi* and other public sinners to communion at home, and eager to affirm their leadership in Churches outside Rome's immediate geographical area. Their Trini-

tarian critics—Hippolytus,[80] Tertullian, Novatian—on the other hand, tended to be "rigorists" on the question of the reconciliation of sinners, sceptical about the degree to which human authority may be relied on in determining the boundaries of the community of grace. The communities around them were generally regarded as schismatic Churches, and were especially critical of the Roman bishops.

b) Klaus Seibt, in his recent massive study of the theology of Marcellus of Ancyra, argues at length that Marcellus' way of viewing the theological tradition before him was strongly influenced by his close relationship to the Emperor Constantine. Seibt views Marcellus' work as an attempt to develop, in the early years of imperial patronage of the Church, a theology suited to an *ecclesia triumphans*: a Christology "borne by a concern for the exaltation and self-confidence of the Church as it became part of the world, as well as for a positive evaluation of humanity in general."[81] Although a similarly triumphalistic tendency has often been noted in the historical and apologetic work of Eusebius of Caesaraea, Marcellus' Origenist contemporary and his arch-enemy in things theological,[82] Eusebius' reasons for celebrating Constantine seem to have been quite different. For him, the Emperor represents the conclusion of God's saving work, which began in the history of Israel;

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[80] This is especially true if we identify the Hippolytus assumed to be the author of *Against Noetus*, which we have discussed above, with the author of the *Refutation of all Heresies* often associated with him. In any case, the author of the second work is sharply critical both of the theology and the reconciliation policy of Pope Callistus: see *Haer.* 9.12.15–26.

[81] *Die Theologie des Markell von Ankyra* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994) 517; for an extended argument towards interpreting Marcellus in this direction, see 460–520.

[82] See, for example, Erik Peterson's famous essay, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935), in which he argues that the Christian theological defense of monotheism in terms of a single divine μοναρχία had, almost inevitably, political overtones supportive of universal imperial government, until the Cappadocians developed a viable model of God as both three and one, in a way without parallel in the created world (see esp. 97–99). George Huntston Williams attempted to draw the same parallel between "the conception one has of Christ and his several offices" and imperial claims to authority in Church and world: "Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century," *CH* 20 (1951): 3.3–33; 4.3–26. Both these positions, along with the similar approach of Hendrik Berkhof, have been elaborately contested by Jean-Marie Sansterre, "Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie 'césaropapiste'," *Byzantion* 42 (1972): 131–195, 532–593; nevertheless, Sansterre argues that Eusebius' "political theology" of exalting Constantine was a strategy to persuade him to take a more active role in Church affairs, and specifically to annul the Nicene credal formula.

the emergence of Christianity from the shadows of persecution for him was the fulfillment of God's promise to his faithful ones, rather than the glorification of the human in the person of Jesus. There is, in other words, a more Biblical and eschatological dimension to Eusebius' affirmation of the value of imperial structures than to that of Marcellus. The center of Eusebius' enthusiasm, in fact, is not the Empire at all, but the Church, which prefigures the Kingdom of heaven.[83] This is a point of comparison, however, that clearly calls for further study.

c) In the Christological disputes of the fifth century, it was principally the Antiochene writers, with their emphasis on the internal unity of God and the irreducible distinction of divine and human in Jesus, who expressed, on occasion, strong support for the providential role of the Christian Emperors.[84] After the Council of Chalcedon, on the other hand, the strongest advocates of Cyril's theology and Christology separated themselves quickly from the imperial Church, and eventually, in large part, from the Christian Empire as well, setting up their own episcopates, which continued to subdivide, as controversy over confessional details continued, into new and more exclusive communities. In Rome and the West during the fifth and sixth centuries, where relations with the Empire varied in warmth but where Papal authority, even outside of Italy, grew steadily stronger to fill the vacuum left by the shrinking of imperial authority, theological sympathy remained strongly pointed in the pro-Chalcedonian (and pro-Antiochene) direction.

These are tentative suggestions, all of which invite further reflection. What is clear is that amid all the hypotheses we may care to form or choose to reject, neither our way of conceiving and talking about God nor our way of conceiving and talking about Christ can be isolated from each other, or treated as distinct, self-contained "fields" of Christian reflection, and that both of them are inseparably connected with our way of understanding the Church and the world.

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[83] See, for example, *Laus Constantini* 5.2–5; 16.6; *In Psalmos* 86.2–4. For a discussion of Eusebius' theological understanding of the Kingdoms of God and the world, see F. Edward Cranz, "Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius of Caesaraea," *HTR* 45 (1952): 47–66.

[84] See, for example, Diodore's comments on Rom 13.1 (K. Staab, *Pauluskommentaren aus der griechischen Kirche* [NTAbh 15: Münster: Aschendorff, 1933], 107); Theodoret, *Commentary on Daniel* 2 (PG 81:1308). See Peterson *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem*, 82–83 for further references.

GOD AND STORMS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Robert M. Grant*

The Episcopal Prayer Book of 1892 still contained "Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea," with "Storms at Sea," "a Fight at Sea against any Enemy," "Praise and Thanksgiving after a dangerous Tempest," and "Thanksgiving after a Victory." More general weather prayers included those "For Rain," "For Fair Weather," "In Time of Dearth and Famine," and "For Fruitful Seasons." These were balanced by thanksgivings "For Rain," "For Fair Weather," and "For Plenty." The twentieth century saw significant changes, notably in 1928,[1] and by 1979, the maritime emphasis was gone, while only the sixteenth-century Litany asked for deliverance "from lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine." On Thanksgiving, there was to be a general mention of "the fruits of the earth in their season," and on Rogation Days, prayer for "the harvests of the land and of the seas." An optional "prayer of the people" asks God "for seasonable weather, and for an abundance of the fruits of the earth." Otherwise, the petitions concentrate on human problems, the church, and its inner life.

God Controls the Weather

In Christian history, various views have been held about the interrelations of God, believers, and the weather. The Bible begins with significant stories about God's universal control of weather. Genesis tells how God made rain fall for forty days and nights (7:4) and later established the rainbow as a sign that there would not be another such flood

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[1] E.L. Parsons and B.H. Jones speak of the 1928 book as "dropping a prayer, which intimated that disastrous weather was a direct divine retribution for sin"; *The American Prayer Book* (New York: Scribners, 1937), 60.

(9:8–17). The Lord "rained down fire and brimstone from the skies on Sodom and Gomorrah" (19:24). To be sure, according to Luke 9:57, Jesus' disciples asked him if he wanted them "to bid fire come down from heaven and consume" their opponents, but he did not encourage them to do so. Doubtless their suggestion was wrong in several respects.

God's Agents Control It

Later on in the story, God's agents, the prophets, are the mediums of his control. Exodus 14:21 tells how Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea away all night with a strong east wind and turned the sea-bed into dry land. In Deuteronomy 11:13–17, Moses says that if the Israelites love God and serve him with heart and soul (cf. 6:5), he will "send rain for your land in season, both autumn and spring rains," but if they serve other gods he will become angry and shut up the skies so that there will be no rain. Such action would be exemplified in the story of Elijah, which dramatically expresses the basic biblical view of weather control (1 Kgs 17–18).

> Now Elijah of Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab (king of Israel), "As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." (1 Kgs 17:1) . . . After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." (1 Kgs 18:1) . . . And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of the rushing of rain." So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again seven times." And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising out of the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you." And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain (1 Kgs 18:41–43).

Josephus presents the story with little change, noting without comment that the Hellenistic author-historian, Menander, who reported "The acts of Ithôbal king of Tyre," corroborates it. He says that "there was a drought in his reign, from the month of Hyperberetaios [third month of the Macedonian calendar] to the same month in the following year. When he made supplication [to Astarte?] a heavy thunder-

storm occurred."[2] Josephus neglects Ithôbal's replacing Elijah and the drought lasting one year, not three. In the New Testament, Luke speaks of drought but lays emphasis only on Elijah's mission.

> There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow (Luke 4:25–26).

James 5:16–18, however, emphasizes Elijah's prayers—not mentioned in 1 Kings or Luke or by Josephus[3]—rather than his mission.

> The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

Philosophers and Others Control it

In ancient times, such deeds were not limited to Hebrew prophets. A fragment from the Charms of the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles tells how he could control the winds, and Plutarch, Clement, and Philostratus insist that he did control them. Philostratus also mentions "Sophocles of Athens" in this regard, while Porphyry in his *Life of Pythagoras* refers to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Epimenides, and Abaris as weather controllers.[4]

In the New Testament, the best example is "stilling the storm." Jesus was asleep in a boat on the lake of Galilee when

> a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat so that it began to fill. Disciples woke him up and said, "Master, do you not care if we perish?" He awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" He asked them, "Why were you afraid? Have you no faith?" They said to one another, "Who is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:36–41).

The evangelist's answer to the question is evidently, "the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

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[2] Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.324 (319–346). According to *Against Apion* 1.123. Ithôbal was "the priest of Astarte" before seizing the throne.

[3] Josephus, *Ant.* 8.319, 328.

[4] H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (6th ed.; Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), 31A 14; Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, 29.

In addition, the Episcopal Lectionary for the Second Sunday after Pentecost in the year 2000 implies exegesis of Mark's storm story as based on Psalm 107:25–30 (NEB), which contains its nucleus.

> At his command the storm-wind rose and lifted the waves high, carried up to heaven, plunged down to the depths, tossed to and fro in peril, they reeled and staggered like drunken men, and their seamanship was all in vain. So they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. The storm sank to a murmur and the waves of the sea were stilled. They were glad then that all was calm, as he guided them to the harbor they desired.

With this, compare Mark 4:37–39.

> A heavy squall came on and the waves broke over the boat until it was all but swamped. Now he was in the stern asleep on a cushion; they roused him and said, "Master, we are sinking! Do you not care?" He awoke, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Hush! Be still!" The wind dropped and there was a dead calm.

Another parallel appears in John 6:21: "Immediately the boat reached the land they were making for."

Acceptance of Weather Regularities

On the other hand, Jesus himself insisted on the regularity and predictability of weather. "Your Father in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

He also said,

> When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the face of the heaven, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times (Matt 16:2–3).[5]

> When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, "A shower is coming," and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat," and it happens (Luke 12:54–55).[6]

[5] Basil says the same (*Hexaemeron* 6.4; GCS N.F.2, 1997), 94–95, as do others; cf. I. Hoffmann, *Die Anschauungen der Kirchenväter über Meteorologie* (Münchener geographische Studien 22; Munich: Ackermann, 1907), 72–75. Cf. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 851–861; Pliny, *Nat.* 18.342–343.

[6] Cf. *Nat.* 18.329.

According to the Paul of Acts 14:17, God provides rains and fruitful seasons, and there was no question of stilling the storm that struck the ship carrying Paul, with two hundred and seventy-five others, from Myra in Lycia to shipwreck on Malta (Acts 27). Paul had warned against sailing because of impending disaster (winter storms, if we rely on Acts 28:11),[7] and the ship was lost, even though all aboard escaped. Paul himself writes of experiencing shipwreck three times and spending a night and a day "adrift at sea" (2 Cor 11:25).

Weather is Essentially Constant

Clement of Rome, even closer than Acts to Stoic ideas of regular providence, says that, "the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter give place to one another in peace. The stations of the winds fulfill their service without hindrance at the proper time."[8] Theophilus says the same, referring to "the periodic alternation of the seasons and the changes of winds, the orderly course of the stars, the orderly succession of days and nights and months and years."[9] He goes into more detail than most apologists and defines the "firmament" (Gen 1:7) as "this heaven visible to us, on which was raised half the water, to serve mankind for rains and showers and dews," while "the other half was left on the earth for rivers and springs and seas."[10] When dealing with sun and moon as created "for signs and seasons and days and years," (Gen 1:14) Basil of Caesarea discusses weather predictions based on phases of the moon, often in reliance on Aristotle.[11]

Origen's Analysis of Prayers

In his treatise *On Prayer*, Origen analyzed prayers and answered questions about philosophical theology raised by two of his correspondents. Prayer is pointless, they say, if firstly, God knows future events in advance and they must occur; and secondly, everything takes place by God's will; his decrees are fixed, and nothing he wills can be changed.

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[7] Haenchen, as cited by Conzelmann, says Paul gives counsel not as meteorologist or experienced traveler but thanks to his prophetic relationship with God. Perhaps the one need not exclude the other (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1963], 142).

[8] *1 Clem.* 20.9–10.

[9] Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.6.

[10] *Autol.* 2. 13.

[11] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 6.4; cf. Hoffmann, *Die Anschauungen*, 75; Pliny, *Nat.* 18.347–350.

Origen agrees that it is pointless to pray for the sun to rise (cf. Matt 5:45, cited above).

The Rise of the Nile

The annual rise of the Nile and its irrigation of Egypt give an opportunity to see the reference of early Imperial politics to personal influence on weather.[12] A laudatory inscription from the Delta under Nero states that all Egypt benefited because of the virtues of a prefect sent by the emperor; these benefits included an increased rise of the Nile.[13] A second-century papyrus shows that priests in the Fayum offered sacrifices "for the rise of the most sacred [Nile]."[14] Another papyrus mentions "the customary sacrifices for our Lord Emperors and their military success and the rise of the Nile and the increase of the crops and the mildness of the weather."[15] The "Egyptian" address by the second-century rhetorician Aelius Aristides ascribes the rise of the Nile to Zeus or Sarapis,[16] and toward the end of the oration to Sarapis, he speaks of the god's constant care, exemplified in his concern for the birth and feeding of all animals and his raising the Nile at the time of harvest.[17] The cult of the Nile was very popular,[18] and when the river did not rise, second-century pagans attacked Christians for not taking part.[19] In the third century, Dionysius of Alexandria responded to such notions by claiming that failures and excesses in the rise were caused by the persecution of Christians.[20]

On the other hand, a rescript of the emperor Hadrian in 135/6 stated that while for two years the rise of the Nile had not been "full," earlier it had been greater than ever. In the long run "the nature of things" (φύσις πραγμάτων) would balance up good and bad

[12] This was a problem in doxography and for Irenaeus. Cf. F. Lasserre, "Nilschwelle," *Der Kleine Pauly* 4 (1972), 130–132.

[13] W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1905), 666, lines 6–10.

[14] L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde* 1.2 (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1912), no. 83; cf. Yale Papyrus 349.

[15] *POxy.* 26.2782.

[16] Zeus, *Oration* 36. (48).104, Keil, 296, 15; wisdom and providence of Sarapis, 123: 302, 6.

[17] Zeus, *Oration* 45 (8), 32–34, 361–362.

[18] D. Bonneau, *La crue du Nil* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964), 315–420.

[19] Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.9.3; *Apol.* 40.2.

[20] Dionysius in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.21.5–6; 22.4.

years.[21] The Roman government and its tax system did not rely on successful governors or Egyptian priests, and many Roman officials relied on Stoic doctrine, in which the Nile was cited as a prime example of regular providence.[22] The church historian, Socrates, also claimed that the river's rise was due to "the limits (ὅροι) of providence"—not to the worship of Sarapis. The rise continued after the Nilometer at Alexandria was moved from the god's temple to the church.[23] One might have expected some such analysis from Dionysius of Alexandria, but his fragments *On Nature* are concerned with the providential government of the universe, not this kind of detail.[24]

Later Christian prayers, however, did not simply praise God for the providential rise of the Nile but asked him for its coming. A prayer to St. Senouthios asks for the rise of the river waters from "you, who were crucified for us" and who will "take pity on us and the poor of your people, because of the widow and the orphans." May he "make the fruits of the earth grow!"[25] The power of prayer was being reemphasized.

Rain/Lightning on the Frontier

A striking example of the power of prayer over weather appears in the famous miracle among the Quadi on the northern Roman frontier, when lightning struck barbarian forces, but not the Twelfth Legion, for whom rain came down. Supposedly the legion was then named Fulminans, lightning-hurling (in reality it had long been styled Fulminata, lightning-struck). Marcus Aurelius had such an event depicted on his column, now in the Piazza Colonna at Rome. The question about the miracle was not whether it happened or not but why it happened, as Eusebius claims.[26] Four explanations were given:

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[21] S. Riccobono, ed., *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani* 1 (Florence: Barbera, 1941), 43435, from three Egyptian papyri; cf. my *Early Christianity and Society* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 58–59.

[22] Cf. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.130, with note by A.S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 886–888.

[23] Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.18; cf. Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 4.25.2–3.

[24] Collected by C.L. Feltoe, *The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 127–164.

[25] Bonneau, *La Cru du Nil*, 435–437.

[26] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.5.3.

(1) Zeus/Jupiter, depicted on the coins and perhaps on the column of Marcus Aurelius, answered a prayer by the emperor.[27]

(2) The senatorial historian, Dio Cassius, says that, "there is a story that a certain Arnouphis, an Egyptian magician, had invoked various demons by spells (μαγγανεῖαι), notably Hermes of the Air,"[28] and a similar account is found in the Suda.[29] Arnouphis himself appears in an inscription from Aquileia[30] that reads thus: "Arnouphis the Egyptian sacred scribe and Terentius Priscus, to the goddess present here"—no doubt Isis.[31] Fifty years ago, J. Guey presented a full account of Arnouphis, identifying "Hermes of the Air" as the Egyptian god Thoth-Shou,[32] perhaps powerful enough to counter the plague at Aquileia in 168–169, when the physician Galen (like Arnouphis?) visited the city.

His colleague Terentius Priscus appears in a mysterious inscription from the Aventine in Rome:

> INVICTO D[eo] NAVARZE (To the unconquered god Navarze) / TERENTIVS PRISCVS / P(ater) F(ecit?) / EVCHETA CVRANTE (with the one who prays in charge of it) / ET SACRATIS / D[onum] D(edit) (he gave it to the consecrated ones) C B.[33]

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[27] Themistius, *Oration* 15, refers to "the giver of life" and had seen a depiction of the event, probably on the column of Marcus Aurelius at Rome in 357. (G. Downey and A.F. Norman, eds, *Themistii orationes quae supersunt*. Vol. I, [3 vols; Leipzig: Teubner, 1965–1974], 2:276, 3:19–29). Antoninus 24.4 is not explicit: fulmen de caelo precibus suis [Marcus] extorsit.

[28] Dio Cassius, 71.8.4 ascribes it to "the divine" (cf. 60.9.4).

[29] *Suidae Lexicon*, A3987 (1.365 Adler).

[30] Besieged by Quadi and Marcomanni in the time of Marcus Aurelius (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History* 29.6.1 [trans. J.C. Rolfe; LCL]).

[31] *L'Année Épigraphique* 1934, 245 = G. Brusin, *Gli scavi di Aquileia* (Udine: Edizioni de "La panarie," 1934), 165–167. For Arnuphis' title cf. F. Cumont, *L'Egypte des astrologues* (Brussels: Fondation Reine Elisabeth, 1937), 121–122; also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.20.3 (they use hieratic); 6.36.1 (they know hieroglyphics, cosmography, geography, ritual); cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.17; Porphyry, *Abstinence* 4.8; Iamblichus, *Mysteries* 1. 1. According to "the Egyptians," Osiris made Hermes his "sacred scribe." (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 1.16.2, trans. C.H. Oldfather, LCL).

[32] Guey, "Mage et Dieu," *RevPhil* 22 (1948): 16–62. He compared the Ptolemaic inscription OGIS 131, dedicated "to the greatest god Hermes, who is Paotpnouphis" (cf. 206, "to the greatest god Hermaos Pautnouphis") and *PGM* 7.345 (ANK SOS ERMAICHO) and 558 (THATH and SO).

[33] H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 2.1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902), 4262.

Presumably the circle of Arnouphis, as of other magicians, was catholic in its religious sympathies, since NAVARZE or NAVARBE means INVICTVS and is an epithet of the Persian god Mithras.[34]

In the eleventh century, the patriarch, Xiphilinus, criticized the story about Arnouphis, arguing that, "Marcus is not reported to have taken pleasure in the company of magicians (μάγοι) or in witchcraft (γοητείᾳ)."[35] Xiphilinus' point is doubtless based on Marcus' *Meditations* 1.6, which states that Marcus had learned from his tutor Diognetus "to disbelieve the claims of sorcerers (τερατευομένοι) and magicians (γοητοί) about incantations (ἐπῳδοί) and exorcism of spirits and the like."[36]

(3) The theurgist Julian, son of another religious writer in the time of Marcus, was also said to have worked the miracle.[37]
(4) Very soon, Christians held that their god had responded to prayers by a legion later described as entirely Christian.[38]

This story about this legion is not unique. Dio Cassius also relates how a century earlier the Roman general, Hosidius Geta, ran out of water while pursuing a Moorish force into the African desert. Fortunately an allied native

> persuaded him to try some incantations (ἐπῳδαί) and enchantments (μαγγανεῖαι), telling him that as a result of such rites they had often received much water. Immediately there was such a downpour from the sky that their thirst was abolished and the enemy astounded, supposing that the divine power was aiding the Romans. They voluntarily came to terms and ended their warfare.[39]

This is the political antecedent of the Christian claim.

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[34] Cf. W. Fauth, "Mithras," *Der Kleine Pauly* 3 (1969), 1363, 23.

[35] Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 9.30–31 I (trans E. Cary and H.B. Foster; LCL).

[36] This passage appears in the tenth-century Suda. A.S.L. Farquharson, *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1944), 1.18.4.

[37] *Suidae Lexicon* I 434 (2.642 Adler), with cross-reference to Arnouphis; cf. E. Boer in *Der Kleine Pauly* 2 (1967), 1519.

[38] Earliest, Apollinaris of Hierapolis in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.5.4; cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 5.6; *Scap.* 4.6.

[39] Dio Cassius, 60.9.2–5. In Dio's account of the other rain miracle, the term for "the divine power" is τὸ θεῖον.

Avoiding the Question?

A few years later Irenaeus more reasonably insisted that we do not know the causes of these phenomena. "What do we know of the origin of rain, lightning, thunder, clouds, fog, and things of that kind?" We may talk about such questions but only God knows the answers.[40] The questions come from a collection of philosophers' opinions used by Irenaeus to prove their lack of sure knowledge.[41] Aristotle had acknowledged ignorance on such matters.[42] Perhaps Irenaeus himself did not know about the rain miracle, though he did accept stories about Christian miracles in his own time, including raisings from the dead.[43] To say that only God knows the cause of rain and lightning is certainly not to question his power to send them.

Not all Christians, however, would have agreed with the further analysis by Theophilus of Antioch, who echoed Jeremiah 10:13 (Psalm 134:7) on God's "multiplying lightnings into rain." He continued thus:

> It is he who sends the thunder to terrify and through the lightning announces the crash of the thunder in advance so that the soul may not faint at the sudden tumult.[44] It is he who limits the power of the lightning as it comes down from the heavens so that it will not burn up the earth. For if the lightning got complete control it would burn up the earth; if the thunder did so it would overturn everything on it.[45]

But with or without the rain miracle, and with or without other specific examples, Irenaeus and Theophilus share the basic Christian, and probably Hadrianic, belief that God's providential rule includes all weather phenomena.

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[40] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.28.2.

[41] H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1929), 367, 20; 370, 12.

[42] Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 339a.

[43] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.4.

[44] M. Marcovichcites Tertullian *Scap.* 2.1: "We worship one God … at whose lightnings and thunders you tremble" and Horace *Odes* 1.34: "Jupiter divides the clouds with flashing fire and shakes the earth,", *Theophili Antiocheni Ad Autolycum* (PTS 44; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 23. Cf. also Seneca, *Nat.* 2.13–59; Plutarch, *Quast. Conv.* 2.666b–d. In *Meteorologica* 369b8, Aristotle supposes that lightning really occurs after thunder but reaches our perception first.

[45] This looks like a souvenir, or exegesis, of Job 12:15 LXX: "If he withheld the water he would dry up the earth; if he let it go he would overturn and destroy it." Compare Job 34:14–15, cited 1.7: "If he withheld his spirit by himself everything would die."

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